

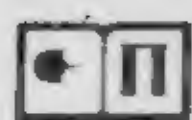
Anatol Astreika
Mikola Auramchik
Alyes Bachila
Maksim Bagdanovich
Rygor Baradulin
Danuta Bichel-Zagnetava
Pyatrus Brouka
Kanstantsia Builo
Genadz Buraukin
Anton Byalevich
Wladzimir Dubouka
Syargei Dzyargai
Stsyapan Gaurusyou
Nil Gilevich
Pyatro Glebka
Anatol Grachanikau
Syargei Grakhouski
Yolga Ipatava
Mikhas Kalachinski

Fair Land of Byelorussia

Ivan Kalyosnik
Wladzimir Karatkevich
Mikola Khvedarovich
Kastus Kireyenka
Yakub Kolas
Kandrat Krapiva
Arkadz Kulyashou
Yanka Kupala
Mikola Kusyankou
Aleg Loika
Yeudakia Los
Maksim Luzhanin
Pyatrus Makal
Arkadz Martynovich
Nina Matsyash
Pimen Panchanka
Wladzimir Paulau
Alyaksei Pysin
Pilip Pyastrak
Alyes Razanau
Mikhas Rudkouski
Alyaksei Rusetski
Rygor Semashkevich
Anatol Serbantovich
Yanka Sipakou
Mikola Surnachou
Yuras Svirka
Maksim Tank
Raman Tarmola
Valyantsin Taulai
Kastus Tsvirka
Vasil Vitka
Anatol Vyalyugin
Anatol Vyartsinski
Yaugenia Yanishchits
Alyaksei Zarytski
Khvyodar Zhichka
Vasil Zuyonak







Progress Publishers • Moscow

Fair Land of Byelorussia



**An Anthology of Modern
Byelorussian Poetry**

Translated by
WALTER MAY

Translated from the Byelorussian
Designed by L. GRITCHIN

Editorial Board: MAKSIM TANK, MIKOLA AURAM-
CHIK, ANATOL VYARTSINSKI (compiler), PIMEN
PANCHANKA, IOSIF SEMEZHON, LYUDMILA
SEROSTANOVA

МОЯ ПРЕКРАСНАЯ БЕЛОРУССИЯ

Антология современной белорусской поэзии

На английском языке

First printing 1976

© Translation into English, illustrated, Progress
Publishers, 1976

Printed in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

70500-090
M ————— 142-75
014(01)-76

5 CONTENTS

A Gift to the People and All Humanity. <i>By Maksim Tank</i>	13
EDZI AGNYATSVET	20
My Wish	21
"Belarus" Tractor in India	21
The "Appassionata"	23
The Law of Attraction	24
Misha Kaminski	24
MIKOLA AROCHKA	27
"Somewhere on the river Nile's green delta..."	28
Elk Calf	28
"At candour..."	29
ANATOL ASTREIKA	30
Blessing	31
My Tent	31
Autumn Goes	32
MIKOLA AURAMCHIK	34
"The thrown wide open windows..."	35
Pigeons	35
Byelorussian Pine	37
Meeting of Old Ponymen	37
"Here they are, the wide and free expanses..."	39
ALYES BACHILA	41
"You, just like poetry..."	42
"When, if but once, with praise like thunder..."	42
To a Girl	43
"And when the last sharp volleys of the war..."	43
"You beg me read..."	44
"No! That was no kind of dream, it's clear..."	45
MAKSIM BAGDANOVICH	46
"One cold dark night upon the field's expanses..."	47
"Warm the eve, and calm the breeze..."	47
Sonnet	47
"The gleaming candle shines and strives..."	48
Romance	48
In My Dreams	49
Fulfilled Promise	50
Borders	50
"I should like to meet you outside..."	52

6 CONTENTS

"In the dark of night the rushlight's flickering..."	52
"When Vassily fell in war..."	53
Levonikha	53
RYGOR BARADULIN	55
The Cradle	56
The Stork	57
The Stones of Brest Fortress	58
Eternity	59
"The peace so long awaited..."	59
DANUTA BICHEL-ZAGNETAVA	61
"If the truth, though a bitter potion..."	62
"From where do you come with such eyes then?..."	62
Potters	63
"In summer I find town killing..."	64
"My cheek to your lips press nearer..."	65
"Around us, as earlier..."	65
PYATRUS BROUKA	67
Hope, little Hopeful	68
Dawn Choir	69
Autumn Goes	70
Skylark	71
The Beginning	72
The Book of Spring	73
The Roads to the Front	74
"Should my friends wish to know it..."	75
KANSTANTSIA BUILO	78
I Love Our Land	79
The Storm	80
"See how the little star of Venus shines..."	81
"Like a little green leaf from the tree..."	82
GENADZ BURAUKIN	83
Poem of Parting	84
ANTON BYALEVICH	91
The Death of Malanya	92
The Cooper	94
WLADZIMIR DUBOUKA	96
"When your lips softly whispered, 'No, no!'"	97
"Lead on, my heart..."	97
Heather	99
Sunrise Over the Pripet	99
"Where are my horses, my horses of black..."	101
"I have known happiness, sorrow I've known..."	102

7 CONTENTS

SYARGEI DZYARGAI	103
Hiroshima	104
A Fairy Tale	105
The Genuine Thing	106
I Hear Your Eyes	107
STSYAPAN GAURUSYOU	108
Bread and Salt of Hospitality	109
Circus Horses	110
"Through evening's garden, garden rosy-dappled..."	111
"Was it the snow-man you were seeking..."	111
Summer Heat	112
NIL GILEVICH	114
"Wonders happen — I awake..."	115
"Do not forsake me now, my yearning sweet..."	115
"My forest blue, my native forest green..."	116
"In that small village, where I've never been..."	116
Night	116
"The birches freeze in the forest..."	117
December Scene	119
"Far off afield in Varna's foothill area..."	119
PYATRO GLEBKA	121
Of What Do the Nightingales Sing?	122
Homeland Bread	123
Lights	124
ANATOL GRACHANIKAU	127
White Russia	128
In Polesye	128
"Upon dawn's writing paper, yellowish-blue..."	129
Twilight	130
The Day Grew Ripe	130
It Is Still Not Yet Night	131
Fairy Tales	132
SYARGEI GRAKHOUSKI	133
"For every invalid my soul is aching..."	134
The Oak Leaf	134
Aching Heart	135
"We grew up chewing bread and chaff alone..."	135
Sweetbriar	135
"It grows dark in autumn quickly..."	136
VOLGA IPATAVA	138
Lilith	139

8 CONTENTS

"You think that sleepless nights are still my part?.."	140
To My Son	140
MIKHAS KALACHINSKI	142
Lake Naroch	143
Recollections	143
IVAN KALYOSNIK	145
Strawberries	146
Memories	147
WLADZIMIR KARATKEVICH	148
The Hare Is Brewing Beer	149
Earthquake	149
Byelorussian Song	151
Sunrise	153
MIKOLA KHVEDAROVICH	154
All of Which We Are Dreaming	155
Lovage	156
KASTUS KIREYENKA	157
The Morning Goes Forth!	158
After the Storm	158
The Thyme's Wild Scent	159
"The darkness fell..."	161
YAKUB KOLAS	162
Do Not Beg, and Don't Expect	164
To Byelorussians	164
Our Folk Will Win	165
Harvest	165
"Take Your Place at the Back!"	166
Brewing Storm	168
"The people all groan from the weight of the sword..."	168
To My People	169
The Voice of the Land	170
A Genius Lives Among Us	171
KANDRAT KRAPIVA	172
Grandad and Baba	173
Close Relations	174
Fritz's Trophy	175
ARKADZ KULYASHOU	177
The Ballad of the Four Hostages	178
To Poetry	180
"I would bury my love..."	180
At Half a Milliard Kilometres	182
Elegy	182

9 CONTENTS

"There is for every poet his plot to harrow..."	183
"We've broken all the laws of gravitation..."	184
"No, I shall never snatch the stars from heaven..."	184
"Not just one month I perish from inaction..."	185
"I owe my mother all — my name at table..."	186
YANKA KUPALA	187
A Peasant	189
What I Saw	190
But Who Marches There?	191
"I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!..."	191
Clouds and Thoughts	193
Fading...	193
To My Girl	194
Betrothal	194
Out Now!	195
For All	196
To Byelorussian Partisans	197
MIKOLA KUSYANKOU	200
"A forest lake. A lovely day awaking..."	201
Our Line	201
Oil!	202
ALEG LOIKA	204
"No sooner had the old well-handle creaked..."	205
"So dear to me this endless great community..."	205
"And fate prepared me too for war..."	206
"But I am dozing still and dream..."	207
YEUDAKIA LOS	208
Mother	209
Our Forefathers	210
"Come, welcome guest..."	210
"In our small town..."	212
MAKSIM LUZHANIN	214
Immortality	215
A Moravian Song	216
Rat-a-Tat!	217
I Just Thought...	218
Oaks	219
The Artist	219
I've Met Them All...	220
PYATRUS MAKAL	222
"It seems the wounds have got better..."	223
"The rocket and the automobile..."	223

10 CONTENTS

To Work, Then, Graver of Light	224
I'm From the Farm	225
Rat-Race	226
ARKADZ MARTYNOVICH	227
A Riddle	228
"Above the green grove, but not high..."	229
NINA MATSYASH	230
"I thought that it was spring alone I loved..."	231
"How long it is the storks have not appeared..."	231
There Lived Once on a Time a River	232
PIMEN PANCHANKA	234
"Grey clouds swept o'er the forest speedily..."	235
The Flame Everlasting	236
Loneliness	237
Heart and Cross	238
WLADZIMIR PAULAU	240
Work	241
"If there rose from each company one man..."	242
Light and Shade	242
ALYAKSEI PYSIN	244
"A thread without a tangle..."	245
"Through my window fifteen stars are sporting..."	245
"Towards day's end the light still lingers..."	246
"In the oak grove the nightingale's silent..."	247
"Much in this life soon passes by..."	247
"Whitening, apple-trees, whitening..."	248
"Suppose you make, just for your soul's own sake..."	249
PILIP PYASTRAK	250
Mausoleum	251
Père-Lachaise Cemetery	251
About Khatyn	252
ALÏYES RAZANAU	254
Speech	255
Unuttered Ballad	255
The Ballad of the Omen	256
The Drummer	258
MIKHAS RUDKOUSKI	259
Polesye Legend	260
My Grandad Was a Village Smith	261
ALYAKSEI RUSETSKI	263
Powder Barrel	264
Revelation	265

11 CONTENTS

April	266
Skylark	267
Zone of Silence	267
RYGOR SEMASHKEVICH	269
Dreams in Technicolour	270
"Ah, the wings of your white arms!.."	271
ANATOL SERBANTOVICH	273
"It's a sight I can't stand..."	274
"On that serene and cloudless early morning..."	274
YANKA SIPAKOU	276
Realm of Mosquitoes	277
"The autumn trees look like an X-ray taken..."	278
Kastus Kalinovski's Noose	278
"Forest groves are bustling with one agitation..."	280
"I love the village in spring..."	281
MIKOLA SURNACHOU	282
In the Trampled Rye	283
Meditation	283
"You stand beside the smouldering ruin..."	284
YURAS SVIRKA	285
Do Not Fade	286
Ballad About a Memorial	287
First Post-War Years	287
MAKSIM TANK	289
At Once When They Told Me	291
"Why plait your hair..."	291
Ave Maria	292
"Of course, it's all the axe's fault alone..."	293
Happiness	294
My Daily Bread	294
Tract on Poetry	295
Pines Above Lake Naroch	299
Let There Be Light	300
RAMAN TARMOLA	302
Ballad of Bomb Fragments and the Early Morning Dew	303
My Wood	304
Grain	305
VALYANTSIN TAULAI	307
My Last Word	308
Stone Upon Stone	309
Verses From Lukishki Gaol	309
Comrade of My Spring	310

12 CONTENTS

My Verses	311
May Day Banners	313
To Tutors	314
KASTUS TSVIRKA	315
Black Earth	316
Grouse Language	316
"Far beyond the hay-heaps drying..."	317
Partisan Song	318
VASIL VITKA	320
Nicolo Paganini	321
Immortality	321
Hardening	322
The Bayonet and the Rose	323
My Dad	324
Rye	326
ANATOL VYALYUGIN	327
Ballad of the Urals Tank	328
ANATOL VYARTSINSKI	331
Lenin's Laughter	332
Requiem for Every Fourth	333
A Man Is ■ Crank	336
The Sea, the Sun, I and Our Lovely One...	337
YAUGENIA YANISHCHITS	339
"Seek me out, send me the call!"	340
Our Neighbour Pelagea	340
"When fire directed at the bird..."	341
ALYAKSEI ZARYTSKI	342
The Girl and the Smith	343
"I was in the fire..."	344
What's To Be Done?	344
Concerning Wine	345
If I Only Knew	346
KHUYODAR ZHICHKA	347
"But what will the neighbours say?"	348
"Here runs the pattern..."	348
VASIL ZUYONAK	350
Memorial	351
"Arise, dead tyrants and oppressors..."	351
"The sound recedes, but melody will stay..."	352
A Word From the Translator	354
Alphabetical Index of Titles and First Lines	

A GIFT TO THE PEOPLE AND ALL HUMANITY

A Word with the Reader

Esteemed reader beyond our borders! You are about to make the acquaintance of Byelorussian poetry, and I should like to preface what will, I hope, be an interesting and instructive meeting with a few words about my country and her poetry.

They say that in order to understand a poet, one must visit him in his country. But it is also true to say that in order to get an idea of a poet's native country, one must get to know his poetry. A poet's heart belongs, first of all, to his native parts, his motherland, and to her he dedicates his most sacred and noblest songs. Poetry and love for one's own land are inseparable. I have been convinced of that by my own personal experience.

I had on many occasions to travel not only around our unencompassable country, but also on numerous delegations to many corners of Europe, Asia and America. I brought back from my travels the firm conviction that on this earth grow not only trees, grass and flowers, but poems too. They grow everywhere. I found them on all the highways and byways, on all continents, and brought them home with me. But all the same, the brightest and most beautiful I found in my native land. That is only natural, for here are my sources, and here are my roots.

Making your acquaintance with our poetry, dear reader, you will not be able to help feeling its blood-ties with our people, our country, and our natural heritage.

In it, particularly in the works of its progenitors, Yanka Kupala, Yakub Kolas and Maksim Bogdanovich you'll hear the voice of social protest, of summons to the struggle for a better life, for the right "to be called humans". That is the voice of the Byelorussian people, whose historical path was extremely difficult, and at times one of great torment. Her people fought against their enemies, internal and external, and alongside them battled their poets and their bards. It is no coincidence that Yanka Kupala's first printed work dates from 1905, the year of the first Russian revolution. It is also no coincidence that precisely with that memorable piece a new Byelorussian poetry begins. "A new period in the history of Byelorussian literature," wrote M. Bogdanovich, "has its starting point in 1905, marking a decisive turning point in the psychology of the mass of the people. From that very time Byelorussian literature

brings its gifts not only to its own people, but to all humanity."

In our poetry, esteemed reader, you will meet the word "revolution", and will catch the bright-sounding chords of praise in honour of October. That is the voice of the people, the song of their souls, for the Great October Revolution put an end to the national and social oppression of the Byelorussians, and opened up to them a wide road to a new and happy life. The second birth of Byelorussian literature, and its free and unhindered development are directly connected with that great event.

In our poetry you will hear praise of the new life, the happiness of inspired and creative labour on behalf of man. That is the voice of the people, the song of a land changed beyond all recognition.'

If you also hear, as truly you undoubtedly will, the anxious echoes of war, its never-to-be-forgotten memories, here white with anger, there black with despair, you must understand that Byelorussian soil was more than once ploughed up by the storms of war, that it is sorrowfully sown with the communal graves of our people's best sons and daughters, who gave their lives for the freedom and independence of their land.

In the struggle with the German fascist invaders over 2,230,000 Byelorussians perished—every fourth inhabitant of our land. That is the reason why in the verses of our poets inevitably rings the mournful bell of Khatyn—the name of a small forest settlement, burned together with all its inhabitants by the hitlerite punitive squads. That same fate overtook scores of other Byelorussian villages. That is why so many Byelorussian poetic works sound like a requiem for every fourth, and as a curse upon all war and its anguished memories.

For this reason too Byelorussian poets, with such power and conviction sing the praise of peace and friendship between the peoples. Their voice is the voice of those who have tasted the full horror of war, and demand that over our globe, the cradle of humanity, the songs of peace and friendship should ring forever. Their voice is that of Byelorussia, who is a member of UNO in her own right, and struggles there for progress and peaceful coexistence between nations.

In the verses of our poets you will feel a wide freedom and a meditative calm.... Here speaks the nature of our land, its tranquil and gently-featured countryside. Here speaks the peaceable and industrious character of our folk.

In the verses of our poets you will hear the rustle of birches, the roar of oaks, firs and pines, and will meet the words "forest", "groves" and "pinewoods". That too is only natural, for practically one third of our Republic is covered with forests. Like great green islands they are scattered about our country. The great ancient forests are called the *pushcha* here. One of the rarest and most beautiful corners of our countryside is the famous Byelovezhskaya Pushcha, with its aurochs. One cannot imagine the history or life of Byelorussia without forests and woodlands, for with them we associate the feeling of homeland. Therefore they have taken their place, as you will see, in our hearts and in our poetry.

In the verse of our poets you may be surprised to hear the splash of waves.... But it cannot be otherwise, for lakes also form an inseparable part of the Byelorussian landscape.

The pearls of our country are our largest lake, named Naroch; and our most hidden and mysterious one—Svityaz, whose praises have more than once been sung by our poets.

Blue lakes. Blue strips of forest. Blue fields of flax. Blue skies. Girls' blue eyes. Eyes blue as the heavens, and heavens as blue as girls' eyes! This is the source of the characteristic epithet of the Byelorussian poet—blue, the depths of blue.

Of course, one cannot imagine the picture of modern Byelorussia without her industrial centres, without her powerful and up-to-the-minute factories, with the last word in technical equipment, without her oil-derricks and her salt-producing combines. While previously our poetry was founded on the peasant way of life, bound up in its origins and its themes with the village, in the last decade it has widened its thematic framework and increasingly pays attention to the city and the factory worker. The new technology, the new instruments of toil are becoming ever more frequently the subject matter of our poetry. But that does not in any way mean that man is left out of our field of vision. Far from it, for as we all know, even the most sophisticated calculating machine is only an assistant to man's mind, even the swiftest flying machines and rockets, going beyond the sound barrier and cosmic velocities, are only the continuation of his steps upon the earth, and the radio stations penetrating the silence of space are his hands stretching out towards the stars.

Man, human life, and happiness—these are the central subjects of attention, and the main source of

inspiration for modern Byelorussian poetry. Therefore, it is interested in everything—from everyday life to historic events. Nothing remains outside its field of vision—the past and the present, the far and the near, the earthly and the cosmic, the personal and the universally human—all comes within its orbit.

I notice, incidentally, that with the development of the scientific and technological revolution, our poetry is being renewed, and is changing its character. Of course, its fundamental principles remain, as previously, its partisanship and popular character.

With its own particular means it strives to reflect the experience of our people, their thoughts and feelings too. But at the same time the poem is taking on a more dynamic character, and in it associative meditation makes itself felt with an ever-increasing power. Poetry is becoming more expressive in style.

Speaking of modern Byelorussian poetry, and of the circumstances and conditions leading to its further development, one cannot help noticing and remarking on such a beneficial factor as its fruitful ties with the literatures of the nations of the USSR—with the Russian, Ukrainian, Lithuanian, Moldavian and so on, and with the literatures of the socialist commonwealth, such as the Polish, Bulgarian and others. On the mosaic map of multinational Soviet literature, every stone in it sparkles with its own unique hue, and every stone, even the smallest, is dear to us, for without it the inimitable harmonious landscape of our multinational literature would be shattered. In recent times this collaboration between our literatures has become especially intensive. Our poetry is translated into the national languages of the peoples of the USSR. Byelorussian poets, in their turn, translate the verses of their colleagues in the fraternal republics into the Byelorussian tongue. This is a significant contribution to the strengthening of international ties and contacts. In our view, the coming together of fraternal literatures gives birth not to some kind of super-national literature, but to one freed from outlived elements, and enriched with new ones, with progressive traditions, arising naturally out of our Soviet conditions, and life as it really is here.

In becoming acquainted with our poetry, the reader will scarcely avoid noticing that poets of several generations are co-operatively at work, side by side, shoulder to shoulder, hand in hand. Alongside the verses of the 70-year-old Kanstantsia Builo, whose first book appeared in 1914 under the editorship of Yanka Kupala, and who,

despite her age, is still actively writing today, are seen the first verses of the 25-year-old Yaugenia Yanishchits — a recent graduate of the Byelorussian State University. Here we see before our eyes the living continuation of the generations. In this way the young poets organically imbibe the best traditions of their native poesy, and learn from the example of their elder brothers of the pen.

Meanwhile the veteran poets for their part do everything possible to facilitate the creative debut of the new poets, and to provide them with a ticket for their great journey on the road to literature.

We in Byelorussia say that if every man planted at least one tree in his lifetime, the earth would be an orchard. We poets of the older generation count it our duty to help to set at least one young author upon his feet.

In general terms the range of age in today's poetry cannot fail to make us rejoice, and to entertain high hopes for the future. It speaks of the diversity of our poetry, of its youth and its maturity.

As far as the poems themselves are concerned, those of old master-hands, and the up and coming young brigade, you have, esteemed reader, an excellent opportunity at present of getting to know them. May the acquaintanceship prove a pleasant one!

*Maksim Tank,
People's Poet
of Byelorussia*

Fair Land of Byelorussia



EDZI AGNYATSVET



EDZI AGNYATSVET was born in Minsk in 1916. Her first poems were published in 1931. Her first collection of verses *My Generation* came out in 1935. They were followed by *Spring Morning*, *Simple Songs*, *To a Friend at the Front*, *On the Volga's Banks* and others. She writes a great deal for children and adolescents. She is a member of the All-Union Association of Workers in Literature and Art for Children.

She translates into Byelorussian the verses by poets from various nationalities of the USSR, and also from the French. The works of Béranger, Appolinaire and Saint-Exupéry have been published in her translations.

The poem "Misha Kaminski" included in the anthology, is devoted to an event of the Great Patriotic War of the Soviet people against hitlerite fascism (1941-45). In May 1943, the inhabitants of Khatyn ("hut settlement"), not far from Minsk, were herded into a barn — the aged, the women and children together — and were burned alive, while their huts were all set afire. A similar fate overtook about 150 Byelorussian villages. Now Khatyn has become a place of pilgrimage. A memorial complex has been laid out there, with rows of niches containing the ashes and names of other "Khatyns" which have perished for ever. Altogether the fascists burned down more than 9,000 villages in Byelorussia.

My Wish
"Belarus" Tractor in India
The "Appassionata"
The Law of Attraction
Misha Kaminski

My Wish

I wish to come to you

with new-found verses.

But they are roaming—

wandering round the copses.

With the wood-zephyrs hide-and-seeking,

With the wood-peckers time are keeping.

Try to find them anyhow!

They are in the wild crane's cry,

the bright cloud pocket,

Or perhaps have flown off in a cosmic rocket?

Dew-drenched,

like the morning brightening,

True-edged,

like the stormy lightning—

I desire to find them now!

Though but little twigs they be in the shady grove,

Though but little bricks they be in my native home,

Seething, frothing main,

Healing drops of rain—

I desire to find them now!

Endless churns my heart's unrest,

all night and day there,

And I serve my ardent breast—

toil like a labourer!

At their forest address,

On the banner of happiness—

I desire to find them now!

1967

“Belarus” Tractor in India

Byelorussian young lads made him strong as a bison,

With massive effect, like a giant, he stands.

He attentively looks at the southern horizon,

Not before having seen these exotic lands.

**He has no tourist ticket—
 he comes as a neighbour,
To live and to work.
 For always, that means.**

**He's captured the language
 of India's nature—
Its bamboo plantations,
 its jungles and streams.**

Then the tractorist came,
gave the works the "once-over",
The sparkling wheel,
the bonnet bright red—
With a wide-lipped grin:
"Machine in good order!"
In broken Russian he approvingly said.

It seemed far away factory hooters saluted,
Byelorussia's dense forests seemed there to resound.
The tractor glanced back towards Minsk,
then on duty
Set off across boundless and burning ground.

The old elephant
 nodded his grey head in greeting,
Amazed at this youthful successor of his.
They say with its strong iron grip this new creature
Showed itself as his equal—a brother, that is.

And black-eyed brown children cried:
“Look! From Russia!”
 Chased after it,
begged to be given a ride.
 And the sun at its zenith smiled down from the azure,
 As if hearing the rustle of birch forests wide.

The "Appassionata"

"Music must strike fire from the human soul."

Beethoven.

All in vain will you listen for here
The echoing fountains!
This is pain, and humanity's tear,
This is thunder in mountains!

And the fierce gust of wind in the glade,
And the eagle's cry, sharper.
This is joy which from grief has made
A majestic martyr.

Here is no kind of rustic idyll,
Here no pastoral lovers.
Here is love which is courage itself—
Which the lightning uncovers.

From humanity's trembling soul
This free music strikes fire.
In the conflict, to sorrow's toll,
Sings of victory near.

And if burning personal grief
Has mown you down in full flower,
It gives courage to you in the strife
With its musical power.

Do you hear
 how the strings reach the stars,
The loud ocean beneath us?
That is man walking proud on earth's path,
There unchained goes Prometheus.

Not for nought Lenin loved this grand theme,
His soul in elation.
He took these full chords as a hymn
To man's liberation.

The Law of Attraction

In nature old Newton revealed
The secret of gravitation.
I believe in the wonderful field
Of mutual attraction.

The rivers yearn for the sea,
Our earth for the stars shows affection,
And a hand from afar reaches me,
To my hand,
 like a magnet's
 attraction.

Invisible bridges arise,
And echoes sound warmer and clearer,
And sudden,
 I feel you arrive,
You draw nearer,
 and nearer,
 and nearer!

No need for your telegrams, dear.
In my heart there's unshaken conviction.
I believe:
 of yourself you'll appear,
For that—
 is the law of attraction!

1970

Misha Kaminski

The Little Lad from Khatyn

A hut. And inside, the laughter of bells,
A babe's first steps—and mother's heart swells....
The little fellow was one, her son,
The little fellow was one!

What did he know, that golden-head?
His first two simple words he'd said,
 he knew mother's song,
 and mother's smile,
 and mother's tale.

Misha Kaminski—
Little Khatynsie.

Ashes—in place of a baby's palms....
A chimney.

 Above it the wind howls alarms.
That's not the wind—
 that is I, my heart
Which from grief is bursting apart.

Above the black chimney—
 the sad bell tolls.

Let it ring out,
 like the thunder rolls—

With a million voices
 let it sound—

Warning savage barbarians round.

 Misha Kaminski—
 Little Khatynsie!

Our little cornflower-blue-eyed one—
Dear land of Byelorussia's son....
To mothers of all the continents five
Your little hands you stretch from the grave,
These hands,
 all blackened and charred in the fire:

“Defend us babies,
 your babies there!

From atom bombs,
 from the napalm we fear,
Protect us, protect us, mother dear!

I want to run on the meadows green,
I want to live, as my own laws mean,

By the law of the sun,
and childhood
and spring....

Protect us children from war's dread sting!
Slain in the war,

I have learned to speak,
Like shoots of grass
through the ashes I break."

... The little fellow was one, her son,
The little fellow was one!

Do you hear the toll?

From the chimney the knell—
That is he who calls o'er the earth like a bell—
Misha Kaminski—
Little Khatynsie!

1970

MIKOLA AROCHKA



MIKOLA AROCHKA was born in 1933, in the village of Vetsyavichi, in the Grodny region. He graduated from the Byelorussian State University, then took a post-graduate course at the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences' Literary Institute. He is Candidate of philological science.

His published books of verse include *Not All Meadows Are Mown*, *Stormbroken Zone*, *Winged Seeds*, *Flowers of an Immortal*.

In recent years he has been actively engaged as a literary critic. He is the author of a series of works about modern Byelorussian poetry.

"Somewhere on the river Nile's green delta..."
Elk Calf
"At candour..."



* * *

Somewhere on the river Nile's green delta
Storks are gathering for their homeward flight.
Maybe there they find no food nor shelter,
Maybe there the living space is tight?

Clearly not.

But in warm lands far distant,
One thing's lacking for their feathered guests—
Those tall oaks, on Nieman's shores existent,
Where they really need to build their nests.

1968

Elk Calf

A crack in the silence, sharp as a shot.
A rumble of hoofs through the saplings ranks.
The mother elk broke aside at a trot,
And shielded her calf behind her flanks.

She lightly leaped across each old stump,
Across the trench with water like pitch.
Well, tottery long-legs, make the jump!
But he couldn't—he couldn't just overcome
His primary fear of the deep dark ditch.

And having returned to her offspring there,
The elk leapt again over waters black.
But he stood and quietly mooed in her track,
And almost cried in the depths of despair.

With safety, with rose-willow smelled that side,
And behind him rough steps were rustling near....
Then she, with her forehead firm and wide
Gently prodded her progeny—under his rear!

Head over heels, topsy-turvy went he.
'Mid the yellowish reeds she lay on the ground.
But still, from her knees, was able to see
How in milky-white mist
Her young calf skipped around!

1970

* * *

At candour,
ever happy to tell all;
at seekers for the fern-flower,
truth as well;
at dreams
which live in hope and indecision—
I'll never cast
 the brick-bat of derision,
Because, so doing,
 I shall strike myself.

1970

ANATOL ASTREIKA



ANATOL ASTREIKA was born in 1911, in the village of Pesochnoye, in the Minsk province. His first verses were published in 1928. In 1940 his book of verse *Glory to Life* came out. During the Great Patriotic War (1941-45) he worked in the editorial offices of a satirical newspaper and poster publication *Crush the Fascist Swine!* On orders from the Staff of the partisan movement, he was twice sent into the enemy rear. In 1943 his collection entitled *Slutsky Zone*, which enjoyed great popularity among the partisans, was issued by the underground press of the newspaper *People's Avenger*. The theme of war remains one of the chief in the present work of the poet.

In the post-war years the following books of his verse appeared: *Kremlin Stars*, *Good-day, My Land*, *The Adventures of Grandad Mikheda*, *With an Open Heart*, and others.

Blessing
My Tent
Autumn Goes

Blessing

Yes, be it blessed a hundred times—
 The happy hour of wished arrival,
 When a brave lad from Soviet lines
 Comes to the land of my own people.
 And blessed be his bold advance—
 Immortal songs shall sing his praises—
 All, glad, will take him in their arms,
 In old Polotsk and green Polesye.
 And blessed be the fray's first sound,
 The distant roar of steel chase rising.
 The prisoner suddenly hears: though bound,
 He glances east with screwed-up eyes then....
 And blessed be the partisan
 Who's first to blast with mine and cartridge
 The battered enemy on the run,
 And vengeance takes, to our advantage.
 Praised be the people's guide and friend:
 Through sleepless nights, with keen-eyed vision,
 To our dear land of tears unstemmed
 He sends the liberating mission.
 The foe burned crops and homes by the score.
 Shall we take insults unrewarded?
 Thrice blessed be those who fell in war,
 Who native soil from foes have guarded.

1943

My Tent

In the forest under birches,
 Hid from foes' inquisitive eye,
 In no hut, and in no trenches,
 But in greenery tent I lie.

In the earth seven stout poles driven—
 Round them twigs and reeds I wove.

Like a burial-mound, moss-hidden,
Stands my partisan abode.

Palm-sized table in the middle—
Five more poles as bed I keep,
Spread with fragrant hay a little,
So as softer there to sleep.

Everything in proper order:
Where I lie—I make my bed.
If there's rain, my tent 'gainst water
I soon pitch above my head.

Time will leave no war-time traces:
Then on eager footsteps bent
Deep in the woods I'll seek old places—
Find my partisan green tent.

1943

Autumn Goes

Autumn goes: a skewbald mare she rides.
Sun takes just a glance, and seeks the cloud.
Flocks of cranes go sailing 'cross the skies,
With resounding cries, prolonged and loud.

Swallows yesterday soared in the height.
Not a single swallow flies today.
How it was they left this land in flight,
When it was—there's not a soul can say.

People say that nobody has seen
When the migrant swallows leave their homes,
And that on the dark bed of the stream
These swift birds fall suddenly, like stones.

“Sowers”—that's what starlings here are called;
If they're gathered ready in their host

And, like bees, swarm out above the field—
Then the days for sowing must not be lost.

From the shed the harrow then we bring,
Gather up the drill-ploughs' whole brigade,
And in autumn, for the coming spring,
How much grain we need to sow indeed!

When the geese go streaming to the south,
Through the pallid skies in arrowing skein,
Then we harness horses to the ploughs—
Surely, we must get potatoes in.

Autumn goes. A skewbald mare she rides.
Rainclouds pass, and sun shines warm again.
We collective peasants field-ward stride,
And each day work harder, might and main.

1945

MIKOLA AURAMCHIK



MIKOLA AURAMCHIK was born in 1920, in the village of Plessy, in the Mogilyov province. His first verses appeared on the pages of the local newspapers in 1937. During the Great Patriotic War against fascist Germany, he took part in battles on the Volkhovsky and North-Western fronts. He was taken prisoner in encirclement, and transported to the Ruhr, where he was given penal servitude in the coal mines.

After the war he studied in the Byelorussian State University, named after Lenin, from which he graduated in 1949. In that same year his first collection of verse *Forward Frontier* appeared. In the following years several other books of his verse were published.

He has been awarded the Republic's Yanka Kupala Literary Prize.

"The thrown wide open windows..."

Pigeons

Byelorussian Pine

Meeting of Old Ponymen

"Here they are, the wide and free expanses..."

* * *

TO M.P.A.

The thrown wide open windows, doors and courtyards,
The blown wide open huts and gates a-yawn
From out the smoke and gloom appeared before us
When we took back the village in the dawn.

A dead girl in the frozen snow was lying,
Her grey disordered plaits fell in a knot.
I did not see—was it the hoar-frost's whitening,
Or were they grey from grief's tormenting lot.

Somewhere as well, perhaps, your broken body
Lies cast aside like that upon the snow,
Your pallid face with tear-stains smeared and ruddy,
And petrified by bitter frost just so.

I longed to find the very shortest pathway
To come to you as quickly as I might....
Some under fire, weak-kneed, went crawling hardly,
While others by my side ran at full height.

The foe held one last hut, fired from the attic.
I did not notice, shooting on the run,
How in the fierce attack my automatic
Expended all the bullets in its drum.

It seemed to me that hut which we were raiding
Was one I knew so well, so long ago....
And if my heart had been a hand-grenade, then
I would have hurled it through the window too!

1942

Pigeons

In the village, mid the fruit and flowers,
Where we passed our years of green and gold,

We would listen quietly for hours
To the ancient yarns, our grandads told.

There we heard the carefree cooing pigeons,
There we saw their young ones' timid flight....
There we knew at dove-grey dawn's beginning
No alarms, no cares, no sorry plight.

There the mists above the huts went curling,
And our distant childhood's skein of days,
Like young dappled pigeons went a-whirling
In a fluttering cloud of mottled greys.

Now those stories we've forgot in worry,
To recall them now would be quite vain....
Helmets on our heads, to war we hurry,
Called away on some unknown campaign.

With the bitter wormwood by the trackway,
And the prickly grasses under heel....
In your throat the gall, your feet in agony,
That is not a story—that is real.

If you chance to doze off for a moment,
Then into your dreams the pigeons whirl....
Maybe somewhere she, in similar torment,
Thinks about you too, your cherished girl.

See, the pigeon knows my thoughts are itching,
Moans there on the path, and doesn't coo—
It's so bitter that the carrier pigeon
Brings me not a word of news from you.

I would die in battle without flinching,
If I knew that children, year by year,
Still would hear the carefree cooing pigeons,
And grow up not knowing grief nor war.

Byelorussian Pine

In every drift it smells of Byelorussia,
With ancient forest's resin-weeping pine....
Beneath the earth each gallery, heading, fissure,
Appears to be a forest in the mine.

Above the low sharp coal-face there the ceiling
Is firmly held by pit-props, line on line,
And overhead, sometimes, you have the feeling
They start to creak like boughs upon the pine.

Upon them presses that preponderous cover,
The seams you've undercut and pinned below,
The strata of millennia hang over,
Five hundred solid metres thick, or so.

'Neath such a weight the pit-prop does not shudder,
Upon its shoulders resin pearls like sweat,
But still the pine-log stands both straight and stubborn,
And strives to break through to the sunshine yet.

With stern persistence coal you go on hacking,
The sparks go flying from your picks at play....
Your native pine beneath such pressure standing
Will never her brave countrymen betray.

1947

Meeting of Old Ponymen

To Pavel Besposhchadny

You were, it's clear, a ponyman by vocation,
But I, my friend, was a conscript ponyman.
I close my eyes—in tense imagination
I see it, like some awful dream, again.

That pit in smoky Ruhr I still remember,
 And there not I, another, bowed in grime,
 A skinny skeleton scarecrow I resembled,
 And on the wall a shadow bent, not mine.

You worked in your own homeland with your fellows,
 And Plover was the name you gave your steed,
 With sharp-pricked ears, and mane like flying billows,
 Who with his hammering hooves struck sparks indeed.

Don't tell me any more of him this evening,
 How down the mine he knew your word so well,—
 My heart, just like a wounded bird's, is beating
 And burning with my memories, as you tell.

I had a nag whose foreign tag was Teufel,
 But I called him Poor Devil more than once,
 Although I did not know his name meant Devil,
 And called him Poor old Devil just by chance.

In that Ruhr pit he was the only person
 To whom I might have said a word, you know—
 But all the same, when I spoke Byelorussian,
 He didn't understand "Gee-up" nor "Whoa!"

With trustful eyes, intelligent and tearful,
 He looked at me with such a longing glance,
 As though he understood, and found it awful
 That to exchange a word we had no chance.

Those living eyes of his grew cold and glassy,
 From constant dark and tears he grew half-blind,
 And they reminded me, how in that darkness
 There waited me a fate of similar kind....

The mist is rising. Here the warmth of twilight
 Dies in the avenue, in the chill of night.
 It seems an ocean somewhere has grown quiet,
 Beyond the dewy poplars' green-walled height.

And further—steppe, the pitheads and the slagheaps—
One takes the other's arm beneath his own,
They stroll, those former drivers of pit-naggies,
Along the street of this Donbas small town.

1957

* * *

Here they are, the wide and free expanses,
Immemorial fields, my native land....
On both sides the billowing rye-sea dances,
Almost floods the road on either hand.

And above them, like an obelisk rising,
Rears a giant oak with proud-poised head,
Thrice-struck by the lightning, still surviving,
Like some watch-tower, guarding branches spread.

When the cock greets dawn, and flaps his pinions,
With the diligent sun, from east to west,
To survey his limitless dominions
Then the stork soars skywards from its nest.

Here a maid her early pathway follows,
Stings her legs on grass bejewelled with dew....
Ice-cold water the old well-bucket swallows,
While the handle hoarsely creaks anew.

If you'd seen how here the lilac blossoms
Round the hut, like tongues of fire, rise
And how this reflected image of them
Fills the windows, and the girl's bright eyes;

How before the coming of the summer,
Orchards warmed by sunshine seethe with flowers,
And the pink-white foam, a pallied wonder,
Splashes on these languishing dales of ours;

If you'd heard the nightingales here warbling,
Drunk with beauty, choiring all night through,
Seemingly their swelling throattles gargling
With the tiny drops of silvery dew;

If at evening dark, when stars are brightening,
You had felt with sentient soul of youth
How in people's hearts the love is ripening,
And in orchards swells the fragrant fruit;

If you'd seen how with the sunset's crimson
Trees are gilded to their topmost stays,
How with purple flame untamed, and winsome,
Here in autumn, heather's all ablaze;

And if not for days, but years, and many,
You had sensed how round us swelling forth,
Here with rye-fields, mushrooms, golden honey,
Smells the bounteous bosom of mother earth,—

Then perhaps you'd understand the reason
Why I cannot live without this land,
And why these fair fields within my vision
All in rosy tints before me stand.

ALYES BACHILA



ALYES BACHILA was born in 1918, in the village of Leshnitsa, in the Minsk province. He was previously a teacher. He took part in the Great Patriotic War. His first book of verse appeared in 1947. He wrote the librettos for the operas "Clear Dawn", "Loyalty", "Thorny Rose", and one devoted to the life of the outstanding Byelorussian poet Maksim Bagdanovich, entitled "Star of Venus", which were presented at the Byelorussian State Opera and Ballet Theatre.

He has been awarded the title of Honoured Worker of Byelorussian Culture.

"You, just like poetry..."

"When, if but once, with praise like thunder..."

To a Girl

"And when the last sharp volleys of the war..."

"You beg me read..."

"No! That was no kind of dream, it's clear..."



* * *

You, just like poetry, more than a million problems
Present to me.... How can I ever know
Why poetry brings me happiness most often,
While you, her sister, ever more often—woe?...

1964

* * *

When, if but once, with praise like thunder,
Life lifts you on its pedestal,
Don't count it as some kind of wonder,
But hush the noisy choir's call.

Then stop the fount of words prophetic—
Without them cares we do not lack.
And know:

 praise to your face emphatic
Is spat in spite behind your back.

And so much dirty mire they're slinging
When first in life a miss you make,
That even truth, like seedlets springing,
Will find the mud-clots hard to break.

Don't haste to drive away indifference,
Nor folk who take you sharp to task.
And learn to know

 the mask of innocence,
And the good man who needs no mask.

And know, that on foundations shallow
Deceit constructs its pedestal.
Better accept truth's bitter aloe,
Than endless praises, bound to pall.

1965

To a Girl

Forgive me—for you must have pardoned others—
That I by chance have seen, with no small pain,
How with your boot-toe on the snow you uttered:
“And do not phone—I shall not come again!!!”

Three exclamation marks—three pillories shameful,
You left for your offender there to see....
Though of your goodness he was most disdainful,
You would have pardoned him—it's plain to me—
The lengthy waiting, and the white snow flying,
And the black unconsolable deceit,
 For not for nought
 with final hopes a-dying,
You looked around.

 I knew, O, near to crying,
What you were feeling in your heart indeed....

Alone and sad, the smart still hot and galling—
I more than once in life have known that part—
You hurried off....

 The snow went whirling, falling,
And covered up the words of love's first hurt.

And when you disappeared then from my vision,
Your pain the pain within my own heart caught;
It seemed as if the blizzard in derision
Spread on my wounds not soft white snow—but salt.

1965

* * *

And when the last sharp volleys of the war
Had died away,
 and silence fell once more,
I thought then, for the first time in my life
How foul that road had been, how full of pain.

If they had said: Take up anew the strife,
 Again endure its awful stress and strain,
 Again dig trenches, and your comrade's grave—
 I obviously

 such strength would never have,
 And would have rather any way been slain
 Than start upon that frightful path again.

When, unexpectedly, I read your smile
 As a confession, love, yet mute meanwhile,
 Then all sweet earthly sounds in one song swelled....
 And if you suddenly told me so:
 Again go through those meetings and farewells—
 I wouldn't have thought twice, nor answered "No!"
 I would have trod that same most lengthy trail,
 And would have still endured, and conquered all—
 If only there,

 where bridges sigh for pairs,
 You would await me, after many cares.

1965

* * *

You beg me read....

 But what? You do not say.
 You know—I am unable to refuse,
 And that from you there's nought I hide away,
 To lie one word, one half, I do not choose.

To read some other's verses, not my own,
 Where all is different, all quite strange what's more,
 Means turning my whole spirit upside down—
 A thing which I have never done before.

So I keep quiet.

 When you have great desires
To explore my soul, as they explore far lands,
I'm here before you—

 look into my eyes—
And like a poem, read me as I stand.

1966

* * *

No!

That was no kind of dream, it's clear—
A dream for one's help never begs....
I saw for myself how the wounded deer
Sank down on its slender legs.

How it sensed the growing gloom in its eyes,
How it laid its head on a stone,
How it tried in vain many times to rise,
And beat with its hooves, lying prone.

And when at last, in the final extreme,
Life's powers went ebbing away,
It lifted its eyes with a suffering gleam,
And begged for sweet life, and for day.

It begged,
 although it could not speak a word—
Can you drive out such memories as these?...
And like icy hail the teardrops rolled
In its mortal agonies.

Perhaps with you—it's a dream unclear,
Perhaps with you—pain's denied,
But understand—it was not a deer,
It was my love which died.

1971

MAKSIM BAGDANOVICH



MAKSIM BAGDANOVICH (1891-1917), one of the founders of modern Byelorussian poetry, was born in Minsk. His father, Adam Bagdanovich, was an ethnographer and historian, an active worker in the People's Will Society. In 1896 the family resettled in Nizhni Novgorod, where friendly relations sprang up between the poet's father and Maxim Gorky. Here the poet began his literary work. In 1913 the only book of his verse to appear during his lifetime—*Garland*—was published, and has since taken its place in the treasury of Byelorussian poetry.

In his creative work Bagdanovich draws widely on Byelorussian folklore. He enriched his national poesy with ancient West-European models. To his pen belong translations of the works of Ovid, Horace, Pushkin, Heine, Verlaine, Verhaern, Nekrasov, Shevchenko...

In his articles he wrote about the creators of Russian and U'krainian literature, and devoted much attention to the question of the development of the Slav peoples' culture. The works of Maksim Bagdanovich are widely and frequently published in the Byelorussian Republic, and have been translated into many languages of the USSR and of the world.

"One cold dark night upon the field's expanses..."

"Warm the eve, and calm the breeze..."

Sonnet

"The gleaming candle shines and strives..."

Romance

In My Dreams...

Fulfilled Promise

Borders

"I should like to meet you outside..."

"In the dark of night the rushlight's flickering..."

"When Vasily fell in war..."

Levonikha

* * *

One cold dark night upon the field's expanses
 I lay beside the fire—in thoughts apart.
 The flames grew weaker, weaker.... Soon they vanished....
 And suddenly somehow I felt light at heart.

Though, hoary dust, upon the field-fire's amber
 A chasuble, as it were, you soon have pulled—
 I know that fire still trembles 'neath the ashes,
 I know below the red heat was not cooled.

What if the chain of sad grey hours of yearning
 Like ash upon my soul has often laid.
 Concealed beneath it faith's hot fire is burning—
 What if you see it not.... Still it's not dead!

1910

* * *

Warm the eve, and calm the breeze, and sweet the hay
 Which have laid me on the earth in growing gloom.
 No more whirls the day's dry dust along the way.
 In the heavens her pallid horn protrudes the moon,
 In the heavens how tranquilly the star-flowers bloom.

One of them has fallen, like a tear afire,
 Now an owl on downy wing goes rustling near,
 And I see, my soul with nature's merged entire,
 How the stars are trembling in the hovering air,
 How the grasses grow so quiet I clearly hear.

1910

Sonnet

Among the sands of Egypt sifting round,
 Above the clear blue Nile's bright-gleaming wave,
 For many thousand years there stands a grave.
 Therein a pot with grains of corn was found.

The seeds were dry as dust, but still were sound,
And vital power within themselves could save,
That, sown again, swift-thrusting shoots they gave,
And soon the ears were waving o'er the ground.

There is your symbol, homeland slumbering still!
When once aroused by your poor people's will
I know that you won't fail to face the day,

But forward you will surge, a thundering stream,
And through all barriers you will force your way,
And far ahead will flow in power supreme.

1911

* * *

The gleaming candle shines and strives
To drive away the dark with light.
In her the flame of beauty lives,
She is attractive, fair and bright.

The fluttering moth is torn with pain,
Drawn from the dark towards the fire,
Willing or not flits round the flame,
Wherein he meets misfortune dire.

The candle burns. And from it seeps
The wax, drop after drop, like dew.
The moth his wings no longer beats—
Beauty, he gave his life for you!

1909-12

Romance

Venus' star o'er the earth has ascended,
Radiant thoughts she has brought me, my dear....
When I first met you, do you remember,
Venus' star then appeared.

Since that first time, loving eyes I've been turning
 Onto dark skies, seeking Venus' light;
 Like her, with tranquil love I am burning,
 Born on that tenderest night.

Nevertheless, separation is nearing—
 Such was our fortune to be from the start.
 Deeply and strongly I loved you, my dearest.
 Now strikes the hour we must part.

In some far borders I shall be pining,
 Hiding my love for you deep in my heart.
 Bright in the night love's star will be shining,
 There in that distant part.

Glance now and then at her, from your distance—
 There in her rays our gazes will meet....
 Though for a moment, our love then will glisten—
 Glance now and then, my sweet....

1909-12

In My Dreams...

I went higher and higher, upon the mountain walking
 Toward the sun, the bright sun which gives us his warmth.
 But the nearer I came on the soaring cliff toward him,
 The severer the cold, with icy breath stepped forth.

The crystalline snow beneath my feet was squeaking,
 The frost more bitterly burned and stung my face....
 I went gloomy and tired through the snow, below retreating,
 Where although the sun's further off, it shines warm
at the base.

1910

Fulfilled Promise

Across the cheerful sunlit forest floor
Cuts the embankment with its yellowed lines.
How level are the rails! Like drawn designs
They fly afar! How bright the semaphore
With its green glass reflects the sunny daze,
And how the telegraph poles with sound vibrate!
Just look! The thrushes on the wires have sat,
The copper burning in the blood-red rays!
And see—pushing aside the branches here
With shaggy paws, a-crackling through the brush
Unhurriedly, from behind a raspberry bush
Emerges now a reddish-brown young bear.
He sniffs the air, and looks around the glade
With lazy eyes, as if still full of sleep,
And then far off, hearing a rumbling deep,
He looks, and suddenly starts in wonder, half-afraid....
Scarce heard the slender rails begin to sing;
With jolly rattle, through the forest green,
Coach following coach, each flying by is seen.
The engine hisses, sparks fly in a string,
The whitening smoke draws out, a river free;
And in the sunlight steel and copper glare;
The people in the coaches laugh.... The bear
Stands listening to my cry: “Verse, now follow me!”

1913

Borders

You cast a glance upon the land's expanse:
There everywhere the huts are clamped
By fences with sharp spikes set all around,
And freely strewn with broken glass.
Just look: behind this meadow grass
By bounds
The sheaves on fields are kept apart,
And ditches run through the forest's heart.

At every border massive blocks of stone
Between the boundless meadows have been lain,
And rows of bayonets at each boundary strain,
And blaze and gaze with zeal unknown
Across the borders of the state,
And see: how many bounds of hate!

How measureless are the wide free poles
Of sacred earth—but then comes man
And fences, bounds and trenches centuries span.
He hid in them, like foxes in their holes,
And lived in terror—by himself,
And trembled like an aspen leaf.
Untrusting, heartless, avaricious, chilled,
And so ill-willed,
For all a stranger, totally strange,
Behind his fence, his bound, his range.
And what goes on beyond, where borders stand?

The workers perish 'neath the crushing yoke,
Those starving and impoverished folk
Who, with their skilled and powerful hand
Created all our worldly wealth,
And laid the furrows in the earth,
And ran the rails of iron roads,
Raised factory chimneys to the skies,
And laboured long with tear-blind eyes,
And knew no rest from toil's hard loads.

But look: across our sacred land,
Like some broad golden wave or band,
Without a limit gleams the harvest sea,
The meadows bloom, the forests sound,
There's wealth and beauty all around
While people perish in cold misery,
In darkness starve, like trembling hounds—
And everywhere the trenches, fences, bounds.

* * *

I should like to meet you outside
On a tranquil deep blue night,
And to say:
“Do you see those vast stars,
The stars of Hercules, bright?
Towards them our sun is flying,
And our earth in the sun’s wake flies.
What are we then?
Only pilgrims,
Travellers among the skies.
Then why upon this our planet
Are quarrels and strife, wounds and scars,
If we are all together
Flying towards the stars?”

1912-15

* * *

In the dark of night the rushlight’s flickering,
For Artyom a linen shirt I’m stitching.
In the centre is a sun embroidered,
Many stars I sewed around the border.
Now into the hut runs my sister dear,
With a pure white page she appears,
With her poor white face all in tears.
“Ah, they have slain Artyom, they have slain him,
In an unknown grave they have lain him!
Oh, they have slain Artyom with the shrapnel,
White the blizzard blows o’er his barrow!”
When I heard that news, my thoughts all mingled,
And my broidery threads all got tangled,
And the brilliant sun grew overshadowed,
From my eyes the light swiftly faded.
Why was I in this sad world created?

1915

* * *

When Vasily fell in war, as he died,
He remembered all his countryside.
Fare you well, yes, fare you well, O my land,
Fare you well, you furrows not upturned,
Never more shall I now speed the plough,
And the eager seed of rye shall not sow,
And the meadow's shade I shall not see,
Nor the field and glade, wide and free!
On your paths no more I shall go,
Your green grass no more I shall mow.
Forest dear, with you I'm forced to part,
Deep dark forest dreaming in my heart.
I shall never more call you mine,
I shall never fell the tall, tall pine.
Oh, farewell to you, family dear!
And farewell to you, my good comrades there.
I shall never press you to my breast,
Sit and talk, laugh and joke, and rest.
Now I bow my brow to you, Byelorus,
My poor country there I greet thus!
Your true son has not forgotten you,
For your sake is laid in damp earth too!
When Vasily fell in war, as he died,
He remembered all his countryside.

1915

Levonikha

Ah, Levonikha, Levonikha of mine!
I shall call you back with my lovely line—
Your black eyebrows, like a horse-shoe arch—
Flashing eyes—just find a pair to match!
I recall your stately walk; more than this
I recall how sweetly you could kiss!

Ah, Levonikha, Levonikha of mine!
You could sing like nightingales divine.
You were always first to stamp your heel,
Like a whirlwind in the dance would reel.
When you reaped the field, in your stride,
Your Levon his smile could scarcely hide!
Ah, Levonikha, Levonikha of mine!
Half the hamlet found in you a god-sib fine!
You could best invite, bring your guests delight,
And respect one right, cheer a sufferer's plight.
You could in due time kindly words impart,
And a moment clasp one firmly to your heart.
Ah, Levonikha, Levonikha of mine!
May God grant you harmony in your time.
May you bring the sad ones happiness here,
All around as then you cheered, still may cheer.
In my memory you will always shine,
Ah, Levonikha, Levonikha of mine!

1915-16

RYGOR BARADULIN



RYGOR BARADULIN was born in 1935, in the village of Gorodok, in the Vitebsk region. He graduated from the philological faculty of the Byelorussian State University. His first verses were published in 1954. Since then a series of collected verses have appeared, among them some intended for children.

His work is known to Russian readers through his book *Tselinograd* (1961) and his collection of lyrics *Storks on the Roof* (1966) published in Russian translation.

He works much in the field of translation, and has translated into Byelorussian many of the works of Byron, Lorca, Mickiewicz, Rainis, Brecht, Tychina, Neris, Tumanyan, Yevtushenko, and others.

The Cradle
The Stork
The Stones of Brest Fortress
Eternity
"The peace so long awaited..."



The Cradle

"Earth is the cradle of human reason, but it's impossible to live for ever in one's cradle."

K. E. Tsiolkovsky.

Heaven's blue is hung like a canopy.
Heartfelt thanks, dear cradle, to you!
You brought up no weakly family,
No high visions did you bring low.

Sky your canopy—sown with galaxies.
Sun—your plaything, clouds—your nurse.
You have healed our spiritual maladies,
You—a speck in the Universe.

Bounded by the wild Carpathians,
Swaddled by Himalayan snows—
Rough as the hands of any labourers—
You no longer can man enclose.

When like eagles we fly, beyond gravity,
To the watchful planets afar,
You, still smelling of clay and caraway,
Then will gleam, like a guiding star.

Even the grey old cosmos we'll humanise,
Though we'll grieve for the Earth remote,
Where the skylark the sun's hot harmonies
Till late autumn cools in its throat.

Rooks above the forest are bickering,
On the meadows lush grasses grow,
Where the foal will crop them, nickering,
Tottering on the side will go.

In the dim dishevelled mistiness,
Where the cosmic sunstorms flare,
We'll remember mother's business,
Hands that rocked our cradle there.

Those kind hands that once initially
Lifted us from Earth, where we stood:
“Look, my chick, the ricks they’re finishing—
See, the cranes fly over the wood!...”

1960

The Stork

To Vasily Bykov

**Restless stork,
with legs so thin and frail—
Long-forgotten dream
of spring's past day.**

...I shall try
to catch it
by its tail—

**But it teases me,
and flies away.**

Now, it seems,
I'll tuck it 'neath my arm

(Running
through the meadow
on its trail).

Over me
white wings spread in alarm,
And before me
flies
a short black tail....

**Tired out,
long afterwards I cry.**

Everyone
tries hard to comfort me:

**“Well,
the stork
wears red top-boots that high!
He will bring you back a pair,
you see!...”**

**Sorrow bows my head,
toil bends my spine.**

**Fate provides me cares
of every sort.**

Hoar-frost silvers
temple locks of mine,

But I still am trying
to catch
that stork.

Well,
 this time
 I'll come back with the bird —
 I've followed him so long—
 I cannot fail.

**Over me
its white wings spread
and whirred....**

**Just you try
to catch
a stork
by the tail!**

1962

The Stones of Brest Fortress

Like nervous veins we pulse
Upon the earth's temple.
We were once the living walls
Of a fort impregnable.
This is our wrath made known,
Turned to stone.
This is we who were burned in the fire,
We—the blood-soaked bricks and mire,
For you, only peace was our desire,
Good people....

1964

Eternity

A brilliant fate for me is foreordained:
 I shall not know the gloomy vault's dumb night!
 With every nerve to eternity stitched tight,
 I'll be no silent witness, nor constrained!
 The cuckoo's told my years within the wood,
 The forest of my hair you'll fleck with snow,
 Imperiously upon my lofty brow
 You'll lay earth's stubborn lines of latitude.
 I shall not fear your golden-setting sun.
 Thought-caravans to the distant stars I'll send,
 The eagles brotherly greetings will extend.
 No fading shade, no echo, I shall run.
 The field-flowers of my eyes won't die away,
 Once having pierced the graveyard's cold damp clay.

1964

* * *

The peace so long awaited.
 The key has entry made.
 The room is dimly lighted
 By a honeyed shoulder-blade.

Excited sudden breathing,
 Exciting sultry breeze,
 Exciting in dim evening,
 Caressing gentle gaze....

The new dawn is awakened—
 The peace and calm and gloom,
 Like honourable match-makers,
 Have silently left the room.

The sound of footsteps dying.
The key has exit made.
In dreamland swift goes flying
The slim moon's shoulder-blade.

1966

DANUTA BICHEL-ZAGNETAVA



DANUTA BICHEL-ZAGNETAVA was born in 1938, in the village of Buskuptsi, in the Grodno region. She finished the Novogrudskoye Secondary School and the Grodno Pedagogical Institute named after Yanka Kupa-la. She lives in Grodno, and works as a teacher of languages and literature. Her published works include *A Maiden's Heart*, *The Nieman Flows On*, *A Fate*.

She also writes for children.

A passionate love for her native parts near the river Nieman, and for working people and folk songs distinguishes her work.

"If the truth, though a bitter potion..."

"From where do you come with such eyes then?..."

Potters

"In summer I find town killing..."

"My cheek to your lips press nearer..."

"Around us, as earlier..."



* * *

If the truth, though a bitter potion,
 You had never told,
 If the Nieman turned from the ocean
 And backward rolled....
 If the pines themselves went walking
 From the woods through the fields,
 If the spring, with water boiling,
 Flowed hot on their heels,
 If the sunbeams on grasses dewy
 Did not warm our hearts,
 If bright May in all its beauty
 Flew away to Mars,
 If our stars, in a storm tomorrow,
 All fell in the rye,
 If you only tears of sorrow
 Should bring to my eye,
 If Byelorussian potatoes
 Should all decease,
 If instead of horses as carters
 They harnessed the geese,
 If in winter the weeping willow
 The ripe cherries bore....

Even then I should love you, dear fellow,
 The same as before.

1960

* * *

From where do you come with such eyes then?
 I belong here. I'm quite usual....
 My mother here begot me,
 Like a pine in the forest set me.
 I got used to storms and misfortune.
 I'm not proud, so they tell me often.

And why do I speak so reluctant?
 Because my land's unproductive—
 It's sandy, gullied, unfruitful....
 I belong here. I'm quite usual.
 I lost my way in the darkness,
 I fell like blue shade on the grasses,
 And rose as a spring when night passes.
 I laughed aloud and light-hearted,
 And ran where the steppe invited.
 They drank me, blue and refreshing,
 Then with hands that smelt of petrol,
 They sprinkled me, life for the sickly,
 On the sands, on the grasses prickly.
 No matter how playful I wrestled,
 The winter held me in chains.
 My streams cut through wide steppeland
 Where no living fount remains.
 For there are no woods, no pine-trees
 To play hide-and-seek with the sunbeams.
 ...I remember the times long gone here—
 I run far away....
 I belong here.

1960

Potters

The gods no clay pots created—
 With their thunder our backs belaboured—
 But clay pots were made by weary
 Old potters from nearby Morina.

A voice in the village one hears:
 "Here come potters!
 They're bringing their wares!"

I asked grandad:
 "Tell me one thing—
 Why do potters' vases sing?

"Don't talk nonsense
 You silly sparrow—
 Pooh—potters—that's all my eye!
 They don't know the smell of rye—
 Should have trod the dusty furrow...."

Our grandads no potters respected—
 That meant people without a hectare,
 And without real peasant labour.
 On this loamy soil, though, neighbour,
 It's really poor threshing here—
 Only gathered in handfuls each year....

But mother's pots today
 Still sing that high, high way....

1962

* * *

In summer I find town killing.
 I'm a peasant girl from the village;
 Toothed sickles at night I'm dreaming,
 And for work my muscles are screaming.
 I'll return to my heart's desire,
 To my recent girlhood aspire.
 I've grown weak and my head starts spinning,
 I can't reap with those sturdy women.
 From annoyance I'm almost crying—
 I have broken my bonds in defiance,
 And no dust, nor time, nor tiredness,
 Even pain I do not notice.
 Again I reap with our lasses.
 Oh, how fragrant the trampled grasses!

1963

* * *

My cheek to your lips press nearer,
A secret I want to know:
White Russia, mama dearest,
Is it a maiden? So?

Her name it sounds so wonderful—
Tell me about her, please....

White Russia is your motherland,
There before you she lies.

Call—
She will answer your calling
With the sound of hot scythes a-slither,
A drop from a leaflet falling
Stirs the surface of the river.

The distance sputters with thunder—
There sings the White Russian sky.
The Nieman gleams thereunder—
Her pure and lucid eye....

1963

* * *

Around us, as earlier,
On all our courses,
Restlessly whirl
These wild horses.

While you still are thinking
That I am the same,
And still your springtime
Beloved maid.

But already my eyes
Have lost their shine,
Many a wrinkle lies
Round these lips of mine.

...Horses—amazing—
Across my threshold—
Three manes a-waving,
A dozen fetlocks.

1966

PYATRUS BROUKA



PYATRUS BROUKA is a People's Poet of Byelorussia. He was born in 1905, in the village of Putilkovichi, in the Vitebsk province. He was one of the first Komsomols, and an activist in the movement. He worked for the newspaper *Red Banner*, on whose pages his first verses appeared. He graduated from the literary and linguistic department of the Byelorussian State University. He was the chief editor of the oldest literary journal, *The Flame*. When the Great Patriotic War began, he volunteered for the ranks of the Soviet Army. He collaborated with the editorial board of the front-line paper *For the Soviet Motherland*, and later with the partisan press. After the war, he again edited *The Flame*, and was then chairman of the Board of the Byelorussian Writers' Union. At the present time he is chief editor of the *Byelorussian Soviet Encyclopaedia*.

He is a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Byelorussia, deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, Member of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences, and a member of the Presidium of the Board of the USSR and BSSR Writers' Unions. He has been awarded the Lenin Prize, is twice laureate of the USSR State Prize, and laureate of the Yanka Kupala Literary Prize.

Hope, Little Hopeful
Dawn Choir
Autumn Goes
Skylark
The Beginning
The Book of Spring
The Roads to the Front
"Should my friends wish to know it..."



Orphaned, the pipe in the forest weeps woeful:
 "You have grown silent now,
 Hope, Little hopeful!"

Who then has reckoned
how that has happened?
Dark clouds have come, and her bright eyes
have blackened,
round cheeks have flattened,
strong arms have slackened.

“Hope, Little Hopeful,”
weeps the pipe, woeful—
“now those brown arms of yours
reap no more rye,
reap no more rye,
stooks do not tie!”

For the fifth night, on the birch near her house,
low hangs her corpse in the thrice-cursed noose.

Sorrow, deep sorrow my poor heart-strings rends:
 "Why, silver birch, did you raise no defence?"

**Yellowing leaves, like bitter tears falling,
scatter around from the birch-tree wailing:**

“Dear kindly people, please don’t abuse me, rather saw right through my roots than accuse me!”

Savage the wind, a ravaging blizzard.
Through the wood wanders a scout, dismal-visaged.
“Sadly, young laddie, with sorrow-dimmed sight,
chop my white trunk, in the black of the night.
Grief makes me weak, I can’t stand till the light!

“...I hear you laughing,
walking and talking,
singing in spring,
in the dawning morning....

“Stormclouds from westwards our bright skies shaded,
how the earth groaned as the grey tanks invaded;
I breathed their smoke, and grew black and faded.

“Savage mad hordes
with a roar our land mangled,
Hope they have strangled,
Beauty they trampled.”

Through the churned earth and the dark forest frantic
strides the stern scout, with his automatic:

“Soon we’ll return
with our friends to the fighting;
sudden we’ll strike,
like thunder and lightning,

“searing the foe with white-hot iron,
our earth we’ll purge—send the war-clouds flying!

“And with the summons:
‘Hope, Little Hopeful!’—
a song of new freedom
the pipe will sing joyful.”

1943

Dawn Choir

The mists of dawn are still arising,
The first light wavers like a thread,
But how the dawn choir is rejoicing,
Enough to waken up the dead!

The nightingale's sweet song first trembles,
The starling's tenor firmly rings;
Some stoutly thunder on the cymbals,
Some pass the bow across the strings.

And then is heard "cuckoo-cuckoo"
In tender tones, as on the flute;
While woodpeckers drum a sharp tattoo,
With "chuck-chuck-chuck" keep time to suit.

The unseen skylark greets the morrow,
Pours out its heart in heavens high.
The cheeky, worldly, courtyard sparrow
Chirps up and says: "And here am I!"

This choir for me is dear and glorious,
I feel my heart sings with them too.
I rise and greet you, happy chorus,
I rise and greet the sun with you.

1957

Autumn Goes

Autumn goes in grey-toned tunic,
Woven out of minatory,
Gloomy clouds.
Her hair-strands hoary
She lets loose above the pasture,
Walks the woodlands, and in handfuls
Throws down leaves with spiteful gesture.

But the sun makes no concession,
Through the piles of clouds he pierces,
Soon he smiles on the old woman.
Other days—I look, and Autumn
Has become more kind, caressing.

She has smiled and started singing;
Bright the tunic she is wearing,
Of brocade and gold inwoven;
With her cheeks like berries burning,
With her eyes like streamlets shining,
Clearest azure, like the heaven.

Now it's lovely in the country.
Stiff the straw-stacks and the hay-ricks
Over Autumn guard are standing:
In the fields are camp-fires burning:
In the ashes, crisp and browning,
Tasty baked potatoes huddle.

Autumn goes through mossy forests,
In a sarafan of heather,
And with every pine-tree whispers;
Even moss, it seems, like silver
On the copper tree-stumps glisters....
I go forth and meet my Autumn.

1957

Skylark

I love you,
Skylark, ringing, swelling,
I prize you for simplicity:

Upon the very earth
Your dwelling,
Yet you
Ascend infinity.

Though with no trill
Of nightingale,
You make rejoice
The silent rye,

Yet all the day
 In heaven's blue vale
 Your little bell
 Is heard on high.

1957

The Beginning

Above our heads no toasts were cried,
 When on life's threshold first we stood.
 But mothers at our cradles sighed,
 And wept, and sang as best they could.

With them to work we must be borne—
 They had no choice, though hard we weighed—
 In sultry fields of rustling corn
 They laid us 'neath the stooks for shade.

All day at work. But in the night
 There came no break, no hour of rest.
 "Sleep, little son, sleep, lassie, tight!"
 They rocked and lulled us at the breast.

Sometimes for us no milk they had—
 With endless cares were close at grips—
 And with ■ sugared pap of bread
 They stopped our hungry infant lips.

They had to leave us out of sight,
 Amid the heat of village toil,
 And only swaddled us so tight
 Lest we small babes should chance to fall.

But swaddling-bands we thrust aside,
 We found our feet soon as we could,
 And barefoot in our boyish pride,
 Upon the stubble stiff we stood.

The whole wide world was quite unknown—
 At all, struck dumb, we stopped to look—
 We met, the first time round the home,
 The cat, the dog, the crowing cock.

Then thunder, summer lightning's flash,
 The quiet of the country night,
 The forest's sigh, the brooklet's splash,
 The August moon, all huge and bright.

We grew.... Day followed day's swift train,
 And strong grew shoulders, hand and breast.
 And washed by liberal showers of rain,
 And dried by cleansing winds again,
 We ventured on our distant quest.

1959

The Book of Spring

The spring in silks, in motley clad,
 Has come to thickets, to the field,
 Has come—and shedding winter's rags,
 The earth appears in deshabille.

Has come—awoke the echoing stream,
 Has come—the bush with candles blazed,
 Adorning all with blue and green—
 You know, she has exquisite taste!

Like a little bell, the welcome lark
 Is sewn upon the heaven's blue veil.
 Spring set the swarms of bees to work,
 'Cross slumbering strings has swept her nail.

Still clearer on the brightened moor
 The twitter of flying flocks resounds.
 The stork, like a "TU-104",
 Returns with dawn to native grounds.

All day she spent in willing toil,
Her house without a hammer built,
While sap from birches drumming fell
From troughs, and into jugs was spilt.

Beneath the sun the furrow shines,
The tractor turns the clods on edge,
As if it were the opening lines
Of Spring's new book he open spreads.

1959

The Roads to the Front

The roads to the front,
And the years' stormy threat....
The fear and the want,
We can never forget.

The smoke's acrid lash,
The hail of hot steel.
And death 'neath each bush,
And death on each hill.

We did not fear death.
The dark road of toil
Left its mark on our heart,
Like a tank on the soil.

Bleeding feet bore the brunt,
But no halt by the birch.
The roads to the front,
Soldier's boots on the march.

Sweat and baccy-smell harsh
On the field footpath borne,
On the tracks through the marsh,
In the thickets, the thorn.

Winds whip, and rains roar,
The sun scorches high.
Kilometres of war
Are not easy put by!

Our losses we'd count—
Our brothers, our men.
The roads to the front,
They remember them.

Bare-headed, no sound,—
The volley broke.
O'er the common mound
The whispering oak.

Our helmets knew well—
They were pierced more than once—
How we sped to our goal—
How revenge goaded us.

We were single in aim,
Kept the oath that we swore.
We marched into Berlin,
We were quits with war.

1961

* * *

Should my friends wish to know it,
I could give no reply.
How did I become poet?
I myself can't say why.

How the lines started ringing,
Until now I've not guessed.
But my heart started singing
Simply what it knew best.

As a lad of the village,
 Of myself I'd relate,
 Of the skies, of green tillage,
 Of my fortunate fate.

And I sang my first verses
 As first furrows I sped.
 Not to girls—to the birches
 Those few lines I then read.

Though no heart-strings I shattered
 With that first song of mine,
 Yet some tears on it spattered
 From the dewy-crowned pine.

True, I have not imprisoned
 Beauty's essence in rhyme,
 Yet the hazel-trees listened,
 And the bushes beat time.

On her nest as she fluttered,
 'Neath the shady pine-tree,
 The kind stork clitter-clattered
 Her agreement with me.

The most bashful of fellows
 Then with boldness rang.
 And what further? It follows—
 Then for people I sang.

Round a camp-fire my writing
 To my friends I revealed.
 The makhorka smoke rising
 Like spring incense then smelled.

Though no glasses they raised me,
 I saw, drunken, such things—
 For my way, as they praised me,
 They provided me wings.

Though the road's dark and dire,
Warmth of heart never dies.
Now the flames of that fire,
Like a beacon, arise.

From all sides, lads, no matter,
I see light shining through.
Many songs I may utter,
But they all sing of you.

1964



KANSTANTSIA BUILO



KANSTANTSIA BUILO was born in 1899, in Vilnius. She worked as a teacher, and as head of the Byelorussian Library and Book Sales Department. Her first work was published in 1910, in the newspaper *Our Fields*, and in 1914, under the editorship of Yanka Kupala, her first collection of verse *The Flower on the Burial Mound* was issued. This was followed by *Dawn*, *Upon the Revived Earth*, *May*, and others. The poem "I Love Our Land", published in this anthology, has become a widely known and popular song. In spite of her advanced years she is still actively writing. She is an Honoured Worker of Byelorussian Culture.

I Love Our Land
The Storm

"See how the little star of Venus shines..."
"Like a little green leaf from the tree..."

I Love Our Land

**I love our land, my mother country
Where I was born, and where I grew,
Where for the first time I met gladness,
And wept my tears of sorrow too.**

**I love our Byelorussian people,
Their huts mid orchards green I love,
The golden grain upon the meadows,
The rustle of the wood and grove.**

**The river, whose swift-flowing waters
Stream forth upon their distant ways,
Its sloping shores, embankments sandy,
The coolness of its lucid waves.**

**I love the spring, whose leaves and flowers
So gladly beautify the earth,
The storks upon their nests a-clattering:
I love the skylark's tuneful mirth.**

**The burning sultry sun of summer,
The sudden shower of pouring rain,
When thunder rolls, and lightning flashes
Through ink-black clouds again, again.**

**With all my soul I love the autumn,
The first sweet swish of sickle and scythe,
When through the rye there go the reapers,
And when haymakers rake the swathe.**

**I love the silvery frosts of winter,
Which graves its patterns on the glass,
The pure white snow which hides the pastures,
And sparkles like the brilliant stars.**

**I love, when weather is inviting,
At evening in the yard to sit,**

And the lake became clouded over,
 and no longer with sunshine sparkled.
 Stormclouds swept across the forest.
 Stormclouds heaped above the meadow,
 And the wind went wildly whistling
 as it bowed the wattle and willow,
 And seized the hay in armfuls,
 as if dancing with its shadow,
 And went suddenly galloping madly,
 as if charging off to battle.
 Then the lightning swift went snaking,
 and the thunder-peals went pelting.
 Down came rain on pathways dancing,
 splashing drops—the coldest and largest.
 Underneath a monstrous hay-rick
 from the downpour we sat sheltering,
 Where it stood upon the meadow
 as a proof of the excellent harvest.
 Then the rainbow bloomed above us,
 with its seven hues spread fanwise,
 And the earth and hay and grasses
 smelt like tea fresh-brewed and fragrant.
 And upon the air—gone the rainstorm—
 descended a silence tranquil,
 Only raindrops around were sparkling,
 with the brilliant sunshine blazing.

1959

* * *

See how the little star of Venus shines
 Early at morn, as soon as day starts gleaming,
 Whole cascades of flaming rays sends streaming
 Into space which never a bound confines.

Slender rays vibrate like arrows gold,
 Some pale blue, and some pure green they're swarming,

Flying to us through the misty morning,
Like some secret code of agents bold.

And she seems to question and to call,
Penetrating yearningly the distance,
And she seems to ask us with persistence
To reveal to her our features full.

But when sunbeams light our planet's face,
When it shines in all its glorious splendour,
Venus, sending us caresses tender,
Sinks back into universal space.

Then the cosmos folds her in its arms,
Carries her into infinity, sleeping.
Only when descends the grey of evening
Venus shines anew with gentle charms.

1964

* * *

Like a little green leaf from the tree of my youth long past,
Your telegram flew as an unexpected guest,
And its merry and happy words so swiftly withal
Such ardent and tender feelings stirred in my soul.
The past called back in fresh colours, so rich and alive,
The past called back like a festival youthful and bright.
Well, and what if my head is lightly powdered with snow,
If a cordial word from youth can excite me so?
If my heart and eyes tender feelings so fully invest?
And I long so to rest my head once more on your breast
As then—when you stroked and caressed these plaits of
mine....
A telegram.... But it brought me news of that time....

1969

GENADZ BURAUKIN



GENADZ BURAUKIN was born in 1936, in the village of Shulyatino, in the Vitebsk region. He graduated from the journalists' faculty of the Byelorussian State University. He worked as a journalist and for a few years was a Byelorussian Republic correspondent of the newspaper *Pravda*. At the present time he is chief editor of the *Youth* journal.

The first book of his verses appeared in 1960. Later other collections of verse — *With Earthly Love and Hate*, *A Breath of Air*, *Harvest*, *Selected Verse*, and others were published.

He is laureate of the Byelorussian Lenin Komsomol Prize.

Poem of Parting



Poem of Parting

*In memory of
Yuri Gagarin*

I

The March days were melting away like belated snow.
Across the asphalt like lizards the streamlets slipped.
And, like buttercups soon to come into blow,
The freckles bloomed on the youngsters' noses snub-tipped.

The youthful spring was ringing with rising power
In the stream of icicles under the quiet eaves.
The brilliant and swollen-headed droplets showered
Upon the begrimed and porous drifts beneath.

And like exhausted heart-cases, hollow of eye,
Forgotten, the snow-men have sunk to the ground
near the flats.

The houses cast off with a sad relieving sigh
Their rust-coloured, once-white woolly sheepskin hats.

The sun broke through the thawed-out window in play,
Its golden ruble scattered in five-kopek spots.
A nightingale's note was suddenly heard that day
From the fledgling sparrow, a fluffy feathery mop.

The heavens were calm and deep and cloudless, and men
Were waiting the skylark's anthem high overhead....
But the radio hoarsely made the announcement then:
"Yuri... Gagarin... is dead...."

And it seemed—

that the throat of the stream was choked by floes,
That the icicles yet more firmly were froze to the eaves,
That a blackening blizzard of sorrow and mourning rose
And swept away in one's soul the springtime leaves.

Then the hope arose—the radio might be at fault,
 Though for how many years now the truth alone it has told
 And the whole wide world was ready to pardon its guilt;
 Although there are many gods upon earth,
 Still he stood alone.

Despair in one's heart broke through the alarming thought,
 Like a squirrel it sought the way out of its wheel in vain.
 But maybe?... But maybe?...

Well, miracles sometimes are wrought....

But the radio only repeated the words again.
 And all the gods were left powerless there.
 Yura-a-a!... Yura!... We didn't take care....

II

He loved the sunshine. Himself was much like the sun
 Which the children draw with bright eyes and generous grin.
 He saw it, both far away when the day was done—
 Beyond the village and pines, and near as near on his wing.

He saw it both small and kind,
like a freckle on Valya's cheek,
 And enormous and blind—
in the porthole of his cosmic ship.

Here it sailed, like his daughter's bright balloon
along the street,
 There it winked in his mother's window
at eve as it dipped.

Here it sank low, like red tulips at Baikonur,
 There it glowed, like the Kremlin's red stars at night,
 Here it sprang up from the waves of the sea with—"Yura!"
 And sparkled and danced in myriads,
like basket-balls light.
 It was with him when to immortal fame he sailed,
 Having broken out of earth's gravitational link,

And then, on return, as dry-lipped Volga's breeze
he inhaled,
 And the dew, like stars on his shoulders
gleamed and blinked

And then—there was the sky and the generous sun,
 And slowly above the fleecy white clouds it arose,
 Like an over-ripe orange—with juice it began to run,
 Which poured all over the aircraft's wing and froze.

And after, the earth began to swiftly draw near,
 And round and round whirled the crazy kaleidoscope:
 Byelorussian forest.... The streets of Gzhatsk appear....
 The Volga.... The Cosmonauts' Town.... Perekop....

And waggons. And platforms. And tribunes. And turbines.
 Korolyov. Komarov. The launching-pad concrete once more.
 The MAZ lorries hooted. The deer ran purblind.
 The howl.... The roar.... The roar....

The sun was shaken, and all of a sudden it shrank.
 And see—it's the rounder's ball of his childhood play—
 Black hard rubber, and stripped from a fascist tank.
 Goal! The ball went flying. And flew right away.

The star unrevealed fell on freezing tree,
 Like a dragonfly, wings weak and sere.
 And from hollow heaven's azure eye
 The aircraft rolled like a tear....

III

Black the ribbons trailed that sad morn.
 The wind froze the finger-nails.
 Wreathed and beflowered floated the urn
 Around Mausoleum walls.

Red Square fell in a hush 'neath its heavy load.
 Silent, like tears restrained, stood the Kremlin too.

Floating above the earth on its long last road
Passed a handful of earth fused fast with the blue.

Sad 'neath the sky passed the burden of death,
Borne shoulder-high with steady tread....
Bated then was the planet's breath.
There humanity bowed its head.

The farewell words are frozen on lips of stone.
The hands of Spassky Tower still slowly and stubbornly
march.

And now the thundering salvoes.

And Mozart and Bach are done.

The firs stand guard on the honorary funeral watch.

IV

Silence along the streets and alleys thawed.
And all Red Square stood empty of people and life.
There stayed with Yura, she, and the Kremlin Wall—
Valya remained—Valentina, his wife.

O how women of every continent envied her—
Her happiness and her earthly feminine will,
When she was able to run her hand through his hair,
And with fingers cool stroke his cheek unshaven still.

O how she now envies the women of every race,
Who await their husbands,
and run to greet their betrothed!
Yura's shoulders today no loving arms embrace—
By a black frame they're enclosed.

Her spectacles clouded over with misty grey haze.
The familiar scar on his brow she seeks with fingers blind—
And from the glass, the cold glass in a daze
They recoil—nothing find.

In this portrait, too, he couldn't restrain a grin.
He hadn't learned to look staid nor sombre, by far.
A mere lad. A lieutenant. A hot-head, out to win.
Yura-a-a!

The guards of honour change — their step the silence assails.
The chimes ring familiar... But more than Milky Way's flare,
He wanted to see his daughters' white wedding veils,
And he wished to kiss the first silver in Valya's hair.
There, where the aircraft fell
the grass-blades again will sprout.

**And other majors will splash in the Volga's wave....
Don't weep, Valentina! Be stout! Hold out!
Valya, be brave!**

**Stifle within you your moan of despair,
Raise your head above the wreath....
Not soon will heal the wound in humanity here—
Your silent grief....**

V

**The years will wave by, the days pass away with their pain.
New spaceships will stitch their traces upon the air.
But doubt will pulse in us, like a throbbing vein:
“We didn’t take care!”**

Time will throw up its conjectures, excuses, and such;
Attention won't be diverted by statues and tears.
If not with direct accusation—with bitter reproach
That death will remain in mind through the endless years.

We warmed ourselves in his most attractive smile,
With bouquets we snowed up the path before him there,
Heaped stars on his breast and shoulder-straps meanwhile
And—didn't take care....

**Yes, grief will grow quiet, and pain cease its riot,
And scars will not cry out their woe.
Expired, entire, this hour undesired,
And smiles will again by glad news be inspired,
New marches the brass bands will blow.**

The sunshine will flood the lush water-meadows again,
 And a million green rockets from earth through the sky will
 flare....

But our hearts will suddenly stab with pain, with pain:
 "We didn't take care of him. No. We didn't take care...."

VI

But he, do you think, would he ever have wished
 or allowed
 Himself to be guarded against the risks of the day,
 To be hampered in hopes, in his will, his desires proud,
 By limiting and inflexible bands, anyway?

Could he ever be a living exhibit caught,—
 A museum piece, a plaything for ages new,
 When he was so truly human, a cosmonaut,
 An ace, and to be ought else would never do?

He was wound around with serpentine parades,
 And deafened by toasts,
 and smothered with smiles of kings.
 But he, closing weary eyes, saw Ladoga lake,
 And his narrow cabin, and cosmic space-craft wings.

And he wished at times
 to jump from the portrait frame,
 To escape from the escorts,
 and run through the meadows barefoot,
 To shout in the forest till echoes rang back again,
 And doze in the field at a centuries-old oak-tree's root.

And he wished to scramble on cliffs
 with precipitous walls,
 Across the resounding steppe to drive the wild horse,
 And not merely bow politely at honorary balls,
 And wave his hand from the platform, of course.

He would not allow them with glory to close
 From him undiscovered horizons and hidden things.
 Once a man on his shoulders powerful pinions grows,
 He's obliged to fly, and never to fold his wings.
 And, maybe, that is the fate of a falcon true—
 Not to tire, and not to age and grow short of breath,
 But to soar above the earth to the bluest blue,
 And in the awakened heavens to meet his death.
 And not in any way wishing our grief to offend,
 Holding back in his breast his last departing cry,
 Perhaps he thought of no other sort of end,
 Than thus—in the heavens,
not folding his wings, to die.

VII

Through our memory, like red-tailed trout, will fly
 Those rumbling thunders of foaming flame.
 And on history's rigorous balance will lie
 Our twentieth century, complex, vain.

As if under Röntgen rays it will stand,
 Beneath the gaze of our heirs, pure and stark.
 And some untarnished aureoles will scatter like sand,
 And unnoticed stars will blaze in the dark.

For them our great Revolution will beat like a heart.
 And we as drops of blood in their pulses will dwell.
 And Lenin's thought will forever of them be a part.
 And the smile of Gagarin—as well.

ANTON BYALEVICH



ANTON BYALEVICH was born in 1914, in the village of Dubrovka, in the Minsk province. He began life as a journalist. During the Great Patriotic War he worked with the Byelorussian front-line press. He was frequently sent on missions in the enemy rear, with partisan detachments.

His first verses were printed in 1937. Since then 15 books of his verses and longer poems have been published.

He also writes literary essays.

The Death of Malanya
The Cooper



The Death of Malanya

To the very hut door, point-blank,
 There rolled up a German tank
 One blue-skied early morning:
 "Are you Malanya Korchik?"
 "Yes, I'm Malanya Korchik."
 "Is your husband a forester here?
 A Bolshevik, it appears?
 Has he joined the partisans?..."
 The Germans waiting stand.

"Where my husband is, I don't know.
 I've looked for him high and low.
 I've asked all the neighbours too.
 Both near and far I shout,
 But no-one has seen him about.
 Wherever it is he's gone,
 And why he doesn't come home,
 I haven't the faintest idea—
 I swear it, by Heaven I swear!"

From her hut by the river bank,
 Malanya they took on the tank
 To H.Q. at the Blue Ravine.
 The noise brought the folk on the scene—
 They looked from window and door,
 They came out
 When they heard the roar.

To the school, with a rattle and clank,
 Malanya rode up on the tank.

The Germans stood around—
 They were silent until they found
 Some cunning and devilish way
 To devise her death that day.
 Some new punishment they would give
 Which would long in legend live,

Which would fly round the huts, far and wide,
 Which would make the SS split their sides,
 When they heard how the woman died.
 They were masters of such sport.
 They were just that sort.

In the blue-skied early morning
 They told Malanya Korchik:
 "Take this lighted candle and come
 Through the village, and back to your home.
 If it doesn't blow out, you'll be safe.
 If it does—you may dig your grave!"

In the blue-skied early morning
 Past the huts went Malanya Korchik,
 And the candle, a pale star, she bore.
 Then each villager stood at his door,
 But their hearts went with her too.
 God grant she would carry it through!

They quietly held their breath
 As Malanya walked with death.
 Barefoot, from the Blue Ravine,
 Through the water-meadows between,
 And the chilly morning dew—
 God grant she would carry it through!

She must carry it over that rise,
 When her home will meet her eyes,
 Her roof and the cabin path—
 How bitter to hear them laugh!
 But perhaps there'll be no cause for mirth,
 If God grants justice on earth?

But from the stream blows a breeze,
 On the flame, on her face, round her knees.
 And the candle blinks, and blinks—
 She gasps as the pale flame sinks
 When the breeze blows freely around—
 Sure, the wind knows no bond, no bound.

"Oh breeze,
 Oh, my gentle wind,
 What evil have you in mind?
 Do you want to please such as these,
 To kill me for fun, dear breeze?
 Gentle wind, I beg you once more—
 I'm not far from my cabin door—
 I can see the roof, the eaves,
 I beg and implore you, please:
 Don't riot, be quiet, lie low!"
 And she bit her dry lips so,
 And gasped at each gust and blow.

Malanya came down from the hill,
 And the candle's pale flame shone still,
 It glittered and gleamed so good—
 Through the courtyard they went—
 Dear God!
 To the eaves, to the window she stepped,
 And the limes from gladness wept,
 And the stork did a dance of his own,
 And lightly all sighed:
 "She is home!"

In the blue-skied early morning
 Three shots struck Malanya Korchik.
 To her threshold, crawling she came,
 And her blood put out the flame....

1942

The Cooper

No cosmic spacecraft he is shaping—
 He makes a barrel 'neath the eaves.
 The spokeshave spurts,
 the scrub-plane scraping,
 Sails in his hands above the staves.

He stands in shavings to his ankles,
The sawdust on his work-bench lies,
And hands inspired and full of wangles,
The craftsman to his work applies.

The barrel's done!

 Hey, stout old lady—
Away you roll! Her booming track
Ends at the step...

 In forests shady
The oak-trees straightway echo back.

Filled to the brim with water boiling,
She doesn't leak a single drop,
Though sweating and with steam-clouds coiling,
Like in Siberian baths, all hot.

To Mars some folk in rockets travel,
Those fire-tailed eagles, full of din—
But we still need that cooper's barrel
To pickle our earthly gherkins in!

With skill another simple barrel
The cooper-craftsman fashions now.
For even scientists of the capital,
In this new cosmic age unparalleled,
Still need a barrel.... Yes?
And how!

WLADZIMIR DUBOUKA



WLADZIMIR DUBOUKA was born in 1900, in the village of Ogorodniki, in the Vitebsk province. He finished a teachers' training school, and later the Higher Literature and Arts Institute named after Bryusov, in Moscow. He worked as a village teacher. He lived many years in exile in Siberia, and his clear and vivid verses reflect the space, strength and beauty of that severe land.

His first book of verse *The Steep* was published in 1923. Later several collections of his works were printed, among them verses and tales for children. He translates from the English, and his versions of Shakespeare's sonnets, and poems by Byron have appeared in Byelorussian.

"When your lips softly whispered, 'No, no!'..."

"Lead on, my heart..."

Heather

Sunrise Over the Pripet

"Where are my horses, my horses of black..."

"I have known happiness, sorrow I've known..."

* * *

When your lips softly whispered, "No, no!" to my kiss,
 your eyes gleamed in answer, "My dearest, hold me tight!"
 And in them an ocean, a whole wide heaven of bliss:
 and in the boundless abyss, the unbounded height.

And while in the hush intermingled the streams,
 the stars in the ocean and sky wove a garland bright.
 Then over the sleeping earth rose dreams within dreams:
 and in the boundless abyss, the unbounded height.

And while in that hour without equal on earth
 the moon hung spell-bound above the clouds in delight,
 the eternal mysteries merged into one deep breath:
 and in the boundless abyss, the unbounded height.

And while the stars were a-scattering wide,
 that hung on the ocean and sky their garland of light,
 your far-gazing eyes were lit with rapture and pride:
 and in the boundless abyss, the unbounded height.

1926

* * *

Lead on, my heart, as you have all along,
 on our clear path together led me forth.
 And may the beauty of our treasured earth
 find full response in our elated song,

Each day I grow more soberly inclined,
 though parched with thirst to life's deep cup I cling.
 The days pass by, and each with rustling wing
 imprints its stamp upon my sensitive mind.

My blood is pulsing like an ancient spring....
 This is not mine, but generations' gone!

They lived before, and will live on and on,
above them hours will fly on fleeting wing....

Submissively I hear and humbly bow,
and silently I heed that beating air.
A burden great within my soul I bear,
less, yesterday, it weighed than it does now....

Within it lie all deeds our forebears wrought,
within it lie all flying dreams I save,
within it lie all gifts which life once gave
for our long life-time, which is all too short....

At last will come the hour, and greedy death
will stop my eyes and ears and mouth, and then
eternity will snatch her pitiless pen
and scratch my final verse upon the earth....

And later generations will appear,
which in the Commune's beauty then will live.
My life for such great beauty I will give,
and all my dreams for such a goal most dear.

For there, beyond ranged years, the future grows,
in which our toiling hands have had a share.
For that the heaviest burden I will bear,
for that all evil-doers I dare oppose.

As far as lies within the powers in me,
as far as lies within my mortal days,
like swelling wave, like flames of fire we'll rise,
from victory to further victory.

But lead me on, my heart, as you so long
on our clear path together led me forth.
And may the beauty of our treasured earth
find full response in our elated song.

Heather

On my fingers here you are lying,
the tiniest bloom on your stem.
Once I asked, and today am enquiring:
What's your secret charm for men?

You are scarcely discerned by our vision,
as small as a poppy seed.
Not far from the earth have you risen,
not noticed by all, indeed.

But blooming to wooded horizons,
or deep in the forest glen,
in such beauty you are bedizened,
you are really immortal then.

With your tiny flowerets spreading,
dear heather, it's lovely to see
your carpet which glows unfading,
your fabulous tapestry.

I gaze at you, and remember
those glades and moorlands of mine,
where once, in my fingers tender
I took you the very first time.

1958

Sunrise Over the Pripet

Like mighty cliffs, a weighty wall,
the gloom-clad oaks reared over the river.
Reeds, rushes, osiers rose and fell,
the mist spread over them its cover.

Above the crowns of sturdy oaks,
beyond their serried ranks assembled,

a splash of blood-red vivid streaks
upon the dark blue heavens trembled.

Gloom—like a loom. The sky—silk threads,
deep corn-flower blue, no whit the duller.
That formed the warp. The running wefts
were made of streams of every colour.

The silk sailed out o'er boundless space,
and quietly Dawn, above it nodding,
embroidered patterns on it traced,
and worked at once with many bobbins.

And fabulous flowers she worked as well,
and magic birds with wide-spread pinions.
The wondrous tapestry, like a tale,
hung over groves and green dominions.

Reflected in the river's eyes,
upon the Pripet's ripples flashing,
the like of it there never was,
the like of it you can't imagine.

Then, suddenly, bands of sunlight lay
upon the blue their ribbons golden,
each brilliant gleaming gilded ray
the magical designs dissolving.

The sky with growing brightness glowed,
the festive light of dawn broke through,
and in its tracks the sun arose
above the ocean corn-flower blue.

Then first the birds struck up their hymn,
then first the flags and rushes shuddered,
then first the forest began to hum,
then first the marshland grasses rustled.

Across the Pripet lay a path,
a road of golden sunshine woven,

either of crystal, or cut glass,
or precious stones and jewels even.

The road of morning stretched to us,
all lapped in light from heaven on high.
It lay upon earth's bosom thus,
and on the expanse of azure sky.

1959

* * *

“Harness your horses, your horses of black,
We'll overtake youth, and bring it back.”

Folk-song

Where are my horses, my horses of black.
Where are youth's forces, life's sources, alack?

Did my black horses intend to play false,
or were they tired on the difficult course?

Horses, you horses, and years, oh you years!
Vainly you try to fly from me, my dears!

Vainly you think that you'll find peace and rest—
I do not know such a thing in my breast.

Right is the road, and wide is the way
which we must travel for many a day....

So of exhaustion you don't need to plead—
I've never met that old lady, indeed!

Such resting-places shall I drive you to,
that from the devil for mercy you'll sue!

Raven-wing horses, my horses of black!
Ravening years, and youth's courses, alack!

I have not paid to my country my debt,
therefore my ardour's not cooling yet.

When the goal's reached, and I've finished my task,
then I will give you the rest that you ask!...

1966

* * *

I have known happiness, sorrow I've known,
but never I played the poor part of a drone.

They never were idle, these working hands,
but always were strong, just like iron bands.

When I was at work, I made my bones creak:
a holiday only in dreams I would seek....

What chance of rest! Day and night, without tire,
I often played, with a spade for a lyre.

Chords from my lyre-strings thundered out free.
Steel wasn't broken! They didn't break me!

What was it brought me through trials at length?
What was it wrought in me monstrous strength?

Faith in the truth, and in bright human lives,
faith that at last there would come better times—

times such as these, when the clear sun would shine
from on high, and would light up this window of mine.

1966

SYARGEI DZYARGAI



SYARGEI DZYARGAI was born in 1907, in Minsk. He graduated from the Minsk Railway School. During the Great Patriotic War he took part in the underground and partisan movements.

He has been writing and publishing his verses since 1938. Among his works are: *With the Eyes of the Future*, *Flint on Flint*, *Four Elements*, *A Holiday on Workdays*, and others. He also works in satire, and is laureate of the Yanka Kupala Literary Prize.

Hiroshima
A Fairy Tale
The Genuine Thing
I Hear Your Eyes



Hiroshima

Upon your ruins of stone
Is hewn
For ever and ever
Death and suffering,
Hiroshima.

The living dust
Fills the boundless abyss
And, finding no peace,
Falls soft in our hearts,
Hiroshima.

We love and remember,
We seek
 and we hope,
We believe
 and we struggle,
We struggle,
Hiroshima.

One minute—
A minute of silence
In memory of what took place—
It is all too little,
Hiroshima.

The eternal silence of guns,
The calm of eternal peace
We count a fitting memorial
To your victims,
Hiroshima.

And that time will come:
And the earth will be filled with spring flowers,
And your tranquil glory
Will rise, new-born,
Hiroshima.

A Fairy Tale

Fly, raven! Somewhere distant
 Are ages' pages skipping.
 Bring back for my assistance
 The water dead and living.
 I sit and think, bent double,
 How to escape my trouble.
 In vain my life I've wasted,
 And nought worth-while created—
 I need the water of life
 And then I'd put that right....
 Maybe....

Away, grey wolf, full stretch, then!
 Fly like a singing arrow.
 Return with my princess, then,
 Through frightful night, tomorrow.
 I sit and think, bent double,
 How to escape my trouble.
 I weep and sigh, a-fading,
 Because I love a maiden.
 But does that maid love me?
 Ah, no, it's plain to see.
 Nay, then!

Old pike, swim through the current,
 The blue sea, ah, mist-ridden,
 Bring me the ring so brilliant,
 And the key on the sea-bed hidden.
 I sit and think, bent double,
 How to escape my trouble.
 I'll learn to sing—sound noble,
 And make a happy betrothal.
 Like a house, the world you see,
 I'll open with that key—
 Open!

So hurry please, my friends, then!
 Like a tale my life is running.

But now the tale is ending—
 And gone beyond returning.
 I sit and think, bent double,
 How to escape my trouble.
 Should I not take up working?
 It's healthier far than shirking!
 And then my care will fly,
 And trouble will pass by.
 Work, then!

1957

The Genuine Thing

Tears are always bitter,
 Sweat is always salty,
 Blood is always scarlet,
 And always black is sorrow.
 There may be tears of gladness,
 And they are more like honey,
 But are they tears, though, really?
 Such dewdrops
 From the heavens!
 And there is cold sweat also—
 The sweat of fear
 And cowards—
 But your shirt it does not sprinkle
 With little silver crystals.
 There's blood that's blue—but that is
 The mouldy imagination
 Of corpses aristocratic....
 There's nothing more to say there,
 And nothing more worth adding.
 There's sorrow that's a trifle—
 Like seeds that come from poppies,
 As light and unsubstantial
 As fluff that falls from poplars,
 As short and as ephemeral
 As slanting showers in summer.

No, those are all not genuine,
Because in life it's certain:
Tears are always bitter,
Sweat is always salty,
Blood is always scarlet,
And always black is sorrow.

1961

I Hear Your Eyes

I hear your eyes.
They sing.
I understand their song.
I sense the melody's line.
I catch its time.
My heart in that same rhythm beats.
No, you could never so pretend.
No, you could never so mistake.
Happiness? So ... it must be so.
Doubting? So ... it must be so.
Presentiment of the end,
Of bitterness,
Of pain....
How could it not be so?
Such ... is meeting.
Such ... is also love.
And all else too!
You goose! No songs come otherwise.
And already I hear your eyes.
They sing.

1962

STSYAPAN GAURUSYOU



STSYAPAN GAURUSYOU was born in 1931, in the village of Novo-Alexandrovsk, in the Mogilyov region. He graduated from the Mogilyov Pedagogical Institute. He worked on the staff of various periodicals.

He began to publish his work in 1948, and since then the following books of his verse have appeared: *Camp-Fires*, *On the Crest of the Wave*, *Generosity*, *The Hurricane*, *Profile of the Century*, and others. His work is very fresh, inventive and sensitive.

He translates from the languages of the peoples of the USSR.

Bread and Salt of Hospitality

Circus Horses

"Through evening's garden, garden rosy-dappled..."

"Was it the snow-man you were seeking..."

Summer Heat

Bread and Salt of Hospitality

On linen hand-towels cross-stitched with red cockerels
 Our bread and salt we offer to our guests,
 Invite them to our table set with crockery
 And foaming jugs of strong home-brew, the best.

We do not hide—indeed a hopeless matter—
 The callouses upon our work-worn hands.
 We gladly share our crust and say: Far better
 Than a hundred rubles, is a hundred friends.

Our house stands with the gate and door thrown open
 Here at the cross-roads of the world so wide.
 Only with dirty boots you won't be welcome
 To cross our threshold, and to step inside.

And those who came with knives about them hidden,
 Prepared to feast around our table so—
 Well, let them take their fill just once, unbidden,
 Today they're guests of our black earth below.

With working hands burned brown in days of harvest,
 Which are not used to wiping tears today,
 We ground and ground, like millstones of the hardest;
 Our fate not once nor twice we ground away.

We went not humble-handed and obedient,
 Nor with bowed head our bitter fate to meet,
 When with its shoots of green so inexpedient,
 Our harvest perished 'neath invaders' feet.

We bent no backs, and did not cringe like beggars....
 Though corns of honest toil our hands have spoilt—
 We share our bread with open hearts, like brothers,
 With love for you,
 —and therein lies the salt!

Circus Horses

People are delightedly applauding—
Like the meadow marguerites wave kerchiefs.
In the arena prance the circus horses—
Horses of the circus.

They should plough the fields, through steppeland hurtle,
Pull the heavy cart, and not go dawdling.
Here they have to trot around in circles,
And don't see the waiting soil before them.

Here it's hooves, not shoes that whirl the waltzes—
Gracious creatures swirl in strict accordance:
Modestly, like villagers, dance the horses,
Do not raise their eyes before the audience.

They don't ask for this, instead of ploughing,—
They don't want folk worshipping them like heroes.
See—the horses on their knees are bowing,—
Bowling on their knee-bones.

Horses know that they are fed for working,
They are used to feel their flanks a-sweating,
And for such tom-foolery—frankly speaking—
Their great-grand-sires never got a feeding.

They are of a liberty-loving nature,
And they love to roam the fields at random.
Ah, if someone opened up the gate there,
How they'd leap and gallop off in freedom,—

Through the warm inviting water-courses,
Where the flowering meadows wait the workers.
Is this not the truth, my circus horses,—
Horses of the circus?

* * *

Through evening's garden, garden rosy-dappled,
The heavy fragrant-scented breeze now runs.
Here, having touched a golden-nectared apple,
A sunbeam hums.

A sunbeam? Maybe that's the satisfied murmuring
Of some wild bee, that with its bribe retires?...
Dust in its wake, the lowing herd's returning
To village byres.

The clouds are hung like lumps of yellow honey,
Like streams of milk the evening mist-wraith rolls.
The skein of geese in waters shallow-running,
The gander calls.

The doors of resinous log-wood huts stand open.
The knife above the new-baked loaf now gleams.
It's time for supper, and it's time for dozing.
It's time for dreams.

Leaving his forge, in leather apron dirty,
The tired-out smith into the courtyard goes—
Then stands in silence—like a wide-spread furnace
The sunset blows.

1961

* * *

Was it the snow-man you were seeking—
That ant beneath the heavens high?
You looked for him, excited speaking,
Not knowing who he was?

It's I.

The gold-white bloom is scattering on the meadow
 Beneath the apple-trees—the orchard's dry.
 And it's so stifling, that the airplane's shadow
 Quickly towards the water wants to fly.

The bridge is bent like fishing rods of birchwood,
 But nothing moves the float—no fish now feeds.
 And like a roach, white-bellied, motionless lurking,
 The river lies entangled in the reeds.

You call into the blue—the echo stumbles.
 A tender trembling breeze hides in the land.
 The ear of corn stands modestly and humble,
 You touch it, and it tries to avoid your hand.

Dear earth, why have you all this growth enlivened
 To wait a disappointing harvest day?
 Dear earth, in vain your grain you've over-ripened.
 Our sun must learn to shine a wiser way.

NIL GILEVICH



NIL GILEVICH was born in 1931, in the village of Slaboda, in the Minsk region. He graduated from the Minsk Teachers' Training College, and later from the philological faculty of the Byelorussian State University.

His work began to be published in 1946. He wrote several books of lyrics, collections of satire and humour, and books for children. He lectures as a literary scholar and folklorist. He is the author of a series of works on folk art.

For his translations of Bulgarian literature into the Byelorussian tongue he was awarded the Order of Kiril and Methodius by the Government of the Bulgarian People's Republic.

"Wonders happen — I awake..."

"Do not forsake me now, my yearning sweet..."

"My forest blue, my native forest green..."

"In that small village, where I've never been..."

Night

"The birches freeze in the forest..."

December Scene

"Far off afield in Varna's foothill area..."

* * *

Wonders happen—I awake:
Snow at dawn falls flake on flake
Soon, so soon.

And it lies in courtyard ruts,
On the fence, on old log huts—
Pure as pure.

For its festive guests spreads forth
Dazzling this fine tablecloth,
White as white.

'Neath its spell the hamlets lie,
Not a word or laugh or cry—
Still as still.

Silently I also stand,
Light of heart in this wonderland,
Bright as bright.

1960

* * *

Do not forsake me now, my yearning sweet.
With you at evening hour I feel so calm.
I walk and hear woods whisper so discreet,
While twilight has not lit its first pale star.

And in the heavens the clouds, like thoughts, as fleet,
Go floating west, where soon the sunset fades.
The shadows thicken in the forest glades....
Do not forsake me now, my yearning sweet.

1961

* * *

My forest blue, my native forest green!
For each—it is his own, which beckons free,
His precious spot, his maples, birch's sheen,
And holds his forest mystery, it may be.

And therefore may you be for ever blessed!
Alone you know, my silent friend, I mean,
With what great happiness I have been your guest,
My forest blue, my native forest green!...

1961

* * *

In that small village, where I've never been,
And even where to seek the hut—don't know,
Mid apple-trees it stands, with threshold clean—
Only in dreams at times I cross it so.

And oft and oft when fields there grow dark green,
I wander, like a ghost, throughout the night,
And cherished evermore, I seek the gate
In that small village where I've never been.

1961

Night

Night.

All is calm.

Outside there's not a soul.

I stand and listen how in silence still

A ripened apple falls from loaded bough

And strikes the rough dry earth beside the hut.

It's over-ripe, and soft, plops in the rut.

I go into the hay loft, chilly now,
 And long, so long, before I'm sleeping sound
 I hear the ripe white apples strike the ground.

Next morning
 Comes a funny-looking girl
 With freckles,
 Hair in bows,
 A gap-toothed smile,
 Still sleepy—gathers them into her trug,
 And takes the biggest, most attractive up,
 All firm and fragrant, bathed in early dew,
 And rubs it with her hands (like wax the skin,
 And squeaks), and, sweetly munching, with a grin,
 August, all ripe, back home she carries off.
 My sleepless night back home she carries off.

1962

* * *

The birches freeze in the forest.
 There's silence on frozen ways.
 And like the silver hoar-frost—
 I feel the tingling days.

They sprinkle down a little,
 From my branchy years they sail,
 And on the white path they settle,
 And on the snowed-up dale.

Ah, sunny breasts of snowdrifts!
 What blizzard formed you so,
 And chapped our lips with its blowing,
 And capped our brows with snow?

Yet still, yet still I'm dreaming—
 I'm there, far off, I'm there....
 On the dusty road at evening,
 With its noisy, merry air.

And mama from our home there
The youngsters calls to sleep.
Belated, so well-known there,
The cart-wheels rattle and creak.

In long felt cloak the driver
Goes trudging off to his rest....
By the window-sills, in the silence,
Soft whispers, and smothered jest.

The corncrake down by the river
Laughs its hoarse "Ha-ha, ha-ha!"
Like a swallow, to her lover,
The maiden flits from the yard.

In her neat black skirt she scurries,
In her blouse of calico clear.
Not to be late she hurries
To her first "I love you, dear!"

O cherished and precious worries!
In vain I grieve, in vain!
I can't return to those roadways
From these cold drifts again.

The maiden who then came breathless
I'm afraid to meet, to behold:
But while I live she is deathless,
She will never never grow old!

And while in memory lonely
I keep that wondrous eve,
I still believe her only,
I still myself deceive,

That once again at evening
The maples I shall see,
And that our first sweet meeting
Will last forever with me.

December Scene

White
 from the skies the crystals are scattering,
 White
 now they fly, broken clouds up above.
 White
 are the pines in woolly scarves standing,
 White
 blows the blizzard through white-shrouded grove.
 White
 are the bushes, enveloped in slumber,
 White
 the soft silence—no scrunching of men....
 White
 as a sheet. Byelorussian December....
 Why
 have you sent me no Snow-maiden, then?...

1965

* * *

Far off afield in Varna's foothill area
 Where not a sound from that resort may stray,
 A symphony from the pre-barbarian era
 Upon three hundred fiddles crickets play.

From every hidden clump of grass and bushes,
 The whole expanse without a bar or bound,
 Augmented by unearthly fine accoustics,
 With heathen music rattles all around.

It seems the whole wide world at once is seething.
 And through me runs that music of delight:
 You won't forget?
 You will remember seeing
 The apple branches full of silvery light?

The music seems earth's confines to be spurning—
Here soaring high, there falling tired from play,
Here from beneath the moon again returning—
In night's profoundness leading me away.

Still farther,
 farther,
 on an unknown pathway,
Where August's fragrance inebriety brings,
Where with the immemorial song of laughter
Bulgaria's ancient earth itself now rings.

I shall forget musicians famed and various,
But I'll remember, at my very grave,
How far afield in Varna's foothill area
The pagan fiddles of the crickets played.

1966

PYATRO GLEBKA



PYATRO GLEBKA (1906-1969) was born in the village of Bolshaya Usa, in the Minsk province. He studied in the Minsk Teachers' Training School, and later graduated from the literary and linguistic department of the Byelorussian State University.

He worked in various editorial offices of the republic's newspapers and journals. During the Great Patriotic War he wrote for the front-line and partisan press. In post-war years he was engaged in scientific works in the Yakub Kolas Institute of Linguistics. He was also head of the Institute of Art History, Ethnology and Folklore. He was elected deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the Byelorussian SSR, and was a full member of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences.

He first appeared in print in 1925. Later his collections of verse and longer poems: *Arch Over the Ocean*, *Four Winds*, *Briar Rose*, *The March of Events*, *Courage*, *Hopes in Motion*, and others were published.

Of What Do the Nightingales Sing?
Homeland Bread
Lights



Of What Do the Nightingales Sing?

Of what do the nightingales sing?
I try to translate them in words,
When the gay green groves in the spring,
And my bitter thoughts, on sad wing,
Are warmed by the warbling of birds.

Of my dear native parts I dream,
And my distant boyhood days,
The oak groves, the maples, the stream,
And the sky with its coralline rim
Lightly clouded with whitish haze.

From war's ruins, one moment, returns
The leaves' cautious rustling laugh,
The long train of trucks road-dust churns,
And beneath the cool welcoming birch
Rests the traveller with bag and staff.

These pictures of my native land—
There's nothing can wipe them away.
Since youth we went hand in hand
Towards the bright future we planned,
But drew nearer to death each day.

And all, from the flowers of the mead,
To the red grains of sand in the soil,
With care in my heart I keep—
But I can't remember, indeed,
Your smile, my darling girl.

Of that well-loved smile I divine
In the nightingale's song a trace—
There's a lyric touch of young pine,
Of the murmuring spring a sign,
And of rowan's sad rustling grace.

And I even imagine, sometimes,
That we, from disaster saved,

Again shall meet, not divide,
But shall walk then side by side
To our happiness, not the grave.

It is surely of that, in the grove,
As soon as the twilight is here,
That the nightingales sing above,
And the bitter grief of my love
With goodly hope try to cheer.

1942

Homeland Bread

The fire burns. And in the trenches
Compatriots dream about their homes,
While sturdy *partizanki* wenches
Are baking dry unleavened scones.

For ever be your name exalted,
You bread we earn by honest sweat—
Just water and flour, not even salted,
And waiting for the griddle's heat.

From burnt-out home, and ruins yawning,
As the ambassador of our woes,
With you upon the road at dawning
The young lad from the section goes.

On foot from Grodno, 'cross the country
Towards distant Moscow he will strive,
Exhausted many a time, and hungry,
And will arrive there scarce alive.

But from the last dry scone remaining,
Crushed in the bottom of his bag,
To taste a crumb nought will constrain him,
Until he meets up with our lads.

Then after fighting, after prison,
Sitting among his own good folk,
He'll think of bread, which in the oven
Is baked with caraway, in the smoke.

And, as we do in Byelorussia,
He'll bring his hosts a gift—of the best
He'll take out of his bag for supper,
A crust of rough and dry rye bread.

He'll share it round, as is the custom,
And say: "Before we drink our wine,
Let's taste, lads, bread from Byelorussia,
That distant land of yours and mine!"

O Lord above! what scent already,
What an aroma from that bread!
And everyone feels slightly heady,
But not from vodka, be it said!

He will be drunk on the remembrance
Of our beloved native land,
Of that old cradle, our inheritance,
Where mother stroked and kissed my hand.

Where every evening in the trenches
Compatriots grieve about their homes,
Where sturdy *partizanki* wenches
Are baking dry unleavened scones.

1943

Lights

Our block is enormous to measure—
Four hundred flats or more here,
Where live a well-known professor,
A doctor, a fine engineer,

A fitter, a marvellous turner,
 A poet, an actor of fame,
 And a young unmarried joiner—
 My neighbour—who's earned a good name.

Here live industrious people;
 And during the working day,
 Breathing deep to itself, and peaceful,
 Silence stands in the bay.

It stands, and from windows watches
 The bustling life in the court,
 As sunshine the playground catches,
 Where the kiddies' mock battles are fought.

There often, among the greenery,
 Near the flocks of children at play,
 A woman stands serenely,
 And can't tear her eyes away.

But when all's a-buzz in the evening,
 Our gigantic block's all bright
 With pink and red and greenish,
 Pale blue and yellow light.

From the topmost floor to the basement
 It shines.... But one place is poor—
 There is no bright light in one casement,
 A window upon the third floor.

And sometimes a newcomer queries:
 "But tell me—who lives there?"
 There lives a mother, still grieving.
 There lives no spring, no pair.

She lives so since that moment
 Of terrible news from the war,
 Which she heard in dread and torment—
 That her son will return no more.

In the nearby blocks the neighbours
Since then, on endless nights,
That window caress with radiance
From all their thousand lights.

And steadily they are shining,
So that spot where grief is still green,
In the whole wide world undying
Should by all the people be seen.

1955

ANATOL GRACHANIKAU



ANATOL GRACHANIKAU was born in 1938, in the village of Sharpilovka, in the Gomel region. He graduated from the Gomel Institute of Railway Engineers. He was a Komsomol worker. He studied at the Higher Literary Courses in Moscow, and worked for the *Literature and Art* gazette.

His first book of verse appeared in 1964. Since then his collection *The Circular Square*, and *Mushroom Season* have been published. His nature poems reflect a deep love of the Byelorussian countryside.

White Russia

In Polesye

"Upon dawn's writing paper, yellowish-blue..."

Twilight

The Day Grew Ripe

It Is Still Not Yet Night

Fairy Tales



White Russia

Upon White Russia lies white snow—
 Like purest conscience, incorruption,
 Like radiant-sparkling absolution
 For sins most deeply hid below.

At dawn the snowdrifts smell again
 Of raspberries' transparent nectar.
 The rose-flushed garden sleeps, a picture
 Spreads quietly outside my pane.

Alarms—away!
 All doubts—away!
 The sounds all help to set one feeling
 That there has been no initial meeting,
 That there has been no parting day,

That there is only one sweet light,
 The light of snow's delightful cover,
 That all is finally past and over,
 And no despair is left in sight.

When touched by trouble, worn by woe,
 When former memories bring you torment—
 Upon White Russia lies white snow—
 Remember then, if for a moment.

1968

In Polesye

In ancient Polesye, like evening bells,
 Unending the hoary mounds toll their knells.
 Here alarming—and there like a morning dream,
 Above the earth tender echoes stream.
 Above my Polesye, like mushrooms, stand mounds.
 Many grandsons, few grandsires in villages round.

And above us, since childhood, like evening bells,
 Unending the hoary mounds toll their knells.
 An ancient lullaby rings in my sleep:
 "Freedom's hard to win, but is harder to keep...."
 And festively sounds in the cranberry morn:
 "Good-day, our successors,
 Good-day, friends new-born!
 May this day bring much grain to the threshing floor,
 May your hearts remember past grief no more...."
 Day draws to its close—and cold grows the knell.
 Like resin, Polesye, let supper-time smell,
 And unslumbering their eyes fixed on us be found—
 Hoary mounds,
 Hoary mounds,
 Hoary mounds....

1968

* * *

Upon dawn's writing paper, yellowish-blue,
 October's first hoar-frost is burning through.
 Above the glades there floats a chilly haze.
 Like crochery now the frozen copses sparkle,
 And clouds, like ancient frescoes in a temple,
 Beneath the cupola sail on distant ways.

A cart is rattling downhill with its load,
 The road beyond the Sozha tiredly trembles,
 And sleepily squeak by wells the bucket handles,
 And Auntie Masha drives away the goats.

Above all this hangs out of place, you see,
 Your question:
 "What's eternity?"

1969

Twilight

When on the meadows deepen twilight shades,
Above the earth—no moon nor early star,
When moose from brushwood hasten to the glades,
And foxes lead their cubs out of their lair,

When rivers with their banks in concord kiss,
No splashing and no pattering anywhere,
When nature holds a wondrous weightlessness,
In all the earth, in water, in the air—

Then silence is for me a purging-time,
While in my soul is harmony and rest.
And then the trembling light of thought and rhyme
Comes slowly, slowly rising in my breast.

And I am then—the river, forest, field—
A mighty knight, a helpless little child.
It seems my earthly fate is then revealed—
I'm but a dewdrop on the bough of life.

One thing I wish: with healing power to fall
On these fair valleys where my forebears died....
And I feel sad, and weak with happiness feel,
As if I look the last time on the light.

1969

The Day Grew Ripe

The day grew ripe. It hung its head
Among June grasses, dewed and hoary.
So much it longed for good any glory,
But still unknown, unsung it died.
And all around was sad and strange,
Obscure, remote, uncomprehended.

The chilly clouds above in calm collected
With their last breath around its grave.
The evening sky with crimson tipped
The airy crowns of pines unbounded,
Already in their buds enshrouded
Hid lilies....
The helenium wept....

1970

It Is Still Not Yet Night

It is still not yet night.
Just look how the fish are leaping:
There's a silvery rain on the stream.
The tug in the bay bellows steam,
Like a bull that's removed from the herd.
Over pastures there slumbers a haze.

It was such a dry, sultry day.
And now is beginning
Dame Nature's nocturnal feast:
The earth and the sky are merging.
The grasses rise. And the stars. And high thoughts.
And dreams come alive.
The forest appears a black wall,
And the moon is a tower.

One wishes to take a look
At the day to come.

Let us wash our tiredness away
In the spring-fresh Sozha,
And sit on the water-logged oak
Which rises out of its depths,
And say not a word.

1971

Fairy Tales

When children sleep,
Sweetly slumbering there
Lie toys and dolls and tales.

But when we sleep—
The fairy tales awake.

These tales—like helmets
Sometimes ward off wounds,
And daytime bitter hurts,
Which give no sleep till dawn.

When one is happy people say:
“His life’s a fairy tale!”
What else! As babes we know
That tales have happy ends.

Again I’ve come home late.
Don’t question me at all,
But be so kind,
And tell me a long, long,
Ever-so-long fairy tale.

1972

SYARGEI GRAKHOUSKI



SYARGEI GRAKHOUSKI was born in 1913, in a little place called Nobel, in the Minsk province. He worked as a turner at a woodworking factory. Later he graduated from the literary faculty of the Minsk Teachers' Training College. He worked in the editorial offices of periodical publications, and as a teacher.

His first verses were published in 1926. Later he came out with a series of books of poetry: *Birthday*, *Waiting*, *The Sun Envies You*, *Memory*, *Poem of the Roads*, and others.

He wrote several books of verse for children, and also works in the field of prose. There is a quiet philosophical note in many of his verses.

"For every invalid my soul is aching..."

The Oak Leaf

Aching Heart

"We grew up chewing bread and chaff alone..."

Sweetbriar

"It grows dark in autumn quickly..."



* * *

For every invalid my soul is aching.
The blind I lead across the stream or street.
I see a one-legged man his hard way making,
I want to bow before him when we meet.

The soldiers hobble past on cruel crutches,
The victims of the last great world-wide war.
And something suddenly at my conscience clutches,
As though some fault of mine they're suffering for.

Each one of them, perhaps, at night is dreaming
Of popped beds, and sun-kissed fields of loam,
And of a girl—moist eyed, and hair a-streaming,
Who dances Cracovienne with them alone.

They often hear the shout of their commander,
See spurts in foreign streams, where bullets boiled....
And so I wish that these two hands should harder
Trail each day, as though for four they toiled.

1958

The Oak Leaf

In August beauty stand the oaks in view,
The paths are strewn with straw and barley stubble.
An oak leaf marked with veins and dashed with dew,
Reminds me of the shape of Byelorussia.

And here it lies upon my open hand,
And seems to me like some fine sheet of armour.
The veins of every oak leaf in the land
With every vein upon my hand welds firmer.

1962

Aching Heart

True happiness will not come without good reason,
And lacking courage a warrior soon will yield,
And lacking sorrow wrinkles are out of season,
And lacking faith no wound will soon be healed.

Our hearts don't start to ache without a worry,
And lacking goodness you don't go at night
Upon a steep and unknown road and hurry,
So to relieve your fellow's grievous plight.

But when you've suffered all, and in full measure,
And never spared yourself for other's sake,
Then do not fear an occasional twinge or seizure,
For you were given a heart that it should ache.

1970

* * *

We grew up chewing bread and chaff alone,
With weals upon our hands and on our spine,
And therefore none at us will cast a stone,
And none reproaches us at any time.

And so we look for no soft "paradise",
And are not bowed by misery and woe,
We live life hard, then simply close our eyes,
Not having finished all before we go.

1971

Sweetbriar

She was pierced thro' and thro' by the cold and the frost,
And the icy blizzards blew wild in the dawns.

Here water was scarce, there all warmth was lost,
And with passing of years the sweetbriar grew thorns.

There was constantly something she lacked in life,
And always insatiable thirst without pause,
Although late in autumn, she still would grow ripe,
And on the steep bank burned her blood-red haws.

When the frost at last freezes my living soul,
Perhaps then no fruit after me will be found,
And before I fall silent, I'd ask one dole—
Set a sweetbriar for me at the head of my mound.

1972

* * *

It grows dark in autumn quickly,
On the grass the rime clings fast,
However you have been living,
Make haste, do your work before dark.

The night wind will whine through the linden,
Its branches will beat on the wall;
Go press your brow to the window,
And seek out one star of all.

But maybe a light in the distance
Will flicker late in the gloom,
Where someone is moaning and whimpers
On the very edge of doom.

Then haste, though the wind is wailing,
Through the marsh and muddy glade,
And knock, and bring words of healing,
And to human woe bring aid.

Each on earth has his road to cover,
And it's short, as you know from the start,
Therefore do not grudge to another
Your goodness of heart.

1972

VOLGA IPATAVA



VOLGA IPATAVA was born in 1945, in the village of Mir, in the Grodny region. She graduated from the philological faculty of the Byelorussian State University. She was a Komsomol worker, and has been engaged in journalism.

She has published two books of verse: *Morning and July Thunderstorms*. She also works in the field of prose and in drama.

Lilith

"You think that sleepless nights are still my part?.."

To My Son

Lilith

It was Lilith, not Eve, was the first
Of women, and wife of Adam.
She was a maker of verse,
And even poems could fashion.

In the cave where the shadows would creep
When the fitful fire grew deadened,
She would often not go to sleep,
But gaze and gaze at the heavens.

And what disturbed Adam too—
Single witness of her strange powers—
Upon fresh-thrown pots she drew
The most fiery heavenly flowers.

“And why do you paint them there?
They don’t make the pot any stronger!”
She threw back her long dark hair:
“They make people think and ponder!”

The first divorce passed off quiet:
God pitied Adam—only human—
And fashioned, to his delight,
From his rib another woman.

And Eve was submissive—no verse—
In the plainest pots did the cooking,
Bore children, and as for the stars—
She never gave them a look-in.

But Adam at night began
To frequent more distant dales,
Where the songs of Lilith rang,
And long canoes rocked on the rills.

Till today he still sees in his dreams,
Here a dewy track, there hears her singing;
Adam wavers till now it seems,
Between Eve and his first love Lilith.

1970

* * *

You think that sleepless nights are still my part?
You think that I am grieving for him yet?
I simply take an ancient truth to heart:
He's gone—and so it's easier to forget.

With friends at lectures, as my notes I write,
As on the overcrowded tram I step,
And in the meditative hours of night,
I still forget him, yes, I still forget.

I don't let empty thoughts plague me by day,—
With calls, and jobs, and trifles I'm beset!
The months will pass. The years will roll away,
But I shall still forget him—still forget....

1970

To My Son

On the land where still you cannot stalk,
Ripening of the grain-ears has begun.
May my land teach you the way to walk,
As it taught me once, sometime, my son.

With their native tongue the forests ring,
With reechoing rivers speak as one.
May my land teach you the way to sing,
As it taught me once, sometime, my son.

**Like the borage growing in the grove,
Smells the hair of maidens when undone.
May my land teach you the way to love,
As it taught me once, sometime, my son.**

1971

MIKHAS KALACHINSKI



MIKHAS KALACHINSKI was born in 1917, in the settlement of Krupki, in the Minsk province. He worked for the press. During the Great Patriotic War he was a military journalist. At present he is chief editor of the *Byelorussia* magazine.

His first poems were published in 1932. Since then he has come out with a series of collections of verse and books for children.

Lake Naroch
Recollections

Lake Naroch

The road had brought us for the night.
The forest's dark had scarcely spread.
Nearby Lake Naroch deeply sighed,
Its freshness flowed around our heads.

The mist's light gauze it swept aside,
And cleared a bright path to the strand,
And like an accordion opened wide,
Lay in long waves across the sand.

The day dies out in distant blue.
Smoked sturgeon smell the breezes waft,
And with their slant-winged sails in view
To shore return the fishing craft.

Their crews with confidence are filled,
With hearts like steel, they know no fear.
Their oars are stout, their hands are skilled,
Their eyes, like wide horizons, clear.

And not for nought has Naroch tossed
And borne them safely through the storm,
And cast them in the abysses, lost,
And from the abyss their souls withdrawn....

1949

Recollections

A shot rang out.

 Behind the raft

The cartridge wads still smouldering rest.
The Party secretary heard the blast,
Felt hot blood flowing from his chest.

And from the hut, where saplings sway,
The beams of light through darkness slice.

And round the lamp the peasants wait
Impatiently for his advice.

With whom
To share the fears which bloom,
When sown by time within their hearts?
They think about the new commune,
Joint toil, green fields, and harvest carts....

It's time for argument, hot retort,
And midnight's glancing through the pane.
A shot....
The secretary's road cut short.
The adviser from the Party slain.

Mown down by sawn-off gun he fell.
The hand of vengeance hastens back
Through orchard trees, and hides as well
The bandit barrel and his own track.

Alarm then takes him in its grasp,
And right up to his farmyard gate
It hunts him, overtakes like dark—
From punishment he can't escape.

He cannot flee, though 'neath his feet
Lies well-known land, the sandy way.
There's dialectic in the fight:
He cannot live, who's had his day!

More people meet.
The gathering's great.
The road to communism lies plain.
The eastern dawn lights up their fate.
Its crimson rays drive out the grey.
Greetings, renewal of the day!

IVAN KALYOSNIK



IVAN KALYOSNIK was born in 1932, in the village of Gritchina, in the Minsk region. He graduated from the Minsk Teachers' Training College, and later took Higher Literary Courses in Moscow. He works as an editor in the *Khudozhestvennaya Literatura* publishing house in Minsk.

His first works were printed in 1952. Since then he has published collections of verse entitled *Five Constellations*, and *If We Are Together*.

Strawberries
Memories



Strawberries

In childhood
Together we ran
For wild strawberries in the wood,
Where the pines on the hillside stand
'Neath high heaven
Sadly stood.
The woodcock we heard, saw a fawn.
Ahead wound the dewy path.
Wild strawberries,
Like red drops of dawn,
We carried in trugs made of bark....
We felt a bit awkward
Because
We had yielded
 and eaten them up,
And at home the excuse we gave was:
“We found some
 but not ripe to pluck....”
I remember the ears rustling soft,
To the wind in alarm they bowed,
When you went with me,
Seeing me off
Along the old time-worn road.
How long is the student's year!
How far from his native home!
But now
I'm returning here—
And to our old road you come.
O red smiling lips
Like the sun—
You have made me courageous quite!
I whisper to you as we run:
“Wait a moment!
The strawberries are ripe!...”

Memories

We grew up, and looked beyond the gate—
Each a warrior's son.
Every day our fathers we would wait—
Here from war they come!

Broken windows lacked all glazing yet—
Where could we get glass?

Village postwomen from their mailbags spread
Sorrow as they passed.

...Infantry come marching, tired-faced—
“No more war,” they sing.

Over verdant grass to them we haste,
May all round, and spring!
But—not all fathers then returned....

Warm is the red sun's disc.
Day stood over that black earth
Like an obelisk.

1958

WLADZIMIR KARATKEVICH



WLADZIMIR KARATKEVICH was born in 1930, in Orsha. He graduated from the philological faculty of the Shevchenko University in Kiev. He worked as a teacher. His verses began to appear in 1955. Later his collections of verse *A Mother's Heart*, *Evening Sail*, *My Iliad*, and others were published.

He works in the fields of prose and dramaturgy, and is a film director. This gives his verses pictorial sharpness and a dynamic quality.

He is the author of several stories and novels, among them *The Sheaf Under Your Sickle*, devoted to the life of the Byelorussian revolutionary Kastus Kalinowski.

The Hare Is Brewing Beer
Earthquake
Byelorussian Song
Sunrise

The Hare Is Brewing Beer

Grey mist is sailing from the mere,
 Above the stubble, blank and bare.
 "Just look, the hare is brewing beer!"
 The people joke about it there.
 But with my penetrating eye,
 Crouched o'er his fire, I see him clear,
 Split-lipped, squint-eyed, long-eared and grey,
 And brewing up his barley beer.
 With shooting sparks burn twigs of firs,
 But he's set firm the cauldron wide,
 And with a stick the home-brew stirs,
 And tastes it, spitting on one side.
 He brews his beer both black and strong,
 And for refreshments takes some beet,
 Some herbs, hare's-cabbage, green and long,
 Some asp-leaves, and the snack's complete!
 With Mrs. Hare he drinks a tot,
 And gives the kids a taster too.
 With high-pitched voices then the lot
 Strike up, "Fresh carrots, wet with dew!"
 You see them—don't drive them away,
 Today just grant them peace and ease,
 For even a hare must have his day
 Before winter blizzards his whiskers freeze.

1955

Earthquake

'Neath the fetters of mountains the oceans burn,
 There the frenzied lava-streams flow....
 "Do not stifle my breast, you crust of earth!
 I'm still breathing and living below!...
 Do you hear? Stony slavery opposes me long!
 Do you hear? Deep down underground,

In the womb of the rocks sighs a monstrous gong,
 As big as the Black Sea round!"
 Here. Here. Here. And there. There. There
 Its boom 'neath the rocks resounds.
 The tom-tom is thundering everywhere.
 Now alerted the hare pricks a sensitive ear.
 The earthquake draws near....
 The mountain deer are deserting the wood,
 The carp start to choke in the stream.
 Any moment now, the peaks, red as blood,
 With their forked tongues of fire will gleam.
 The sea has stirred, with grief on its face....
 Silt churns with a blood-tinged tint,
 To the trembling shore the great breakers race—
 Towering walls of cast iron a-glint.
 Do you hear? Now.... It's coming! Now! Now!! Now!!!
 The world's axle creaks and then breaks,
 Meadows wrinkle and crumple like cloth, somehow—
 An earthquake!
 An earthquake!
 Earth shakes!!
 We're deafened by Archangel Gabriel's last trump,
 The mountains for succour cry,
 From jolts 'neath their feet the great oak-trees jump,
 Castle-towers in the heavens fly.
 The nails from the crosses like bullets whizz,
 And raising the dust of dead days,
 Into blood-streaked thunderclouds corpses rise
 From famous and infamous graves.
 Do you hear? Now.... It's coming! Now! Now!! Now!!!
 The world's axle creaks and breaks.
 Earth's squashed like a melon by a sledge-hammer blow—
 An earthquake!
 An earthquake!
 Earth shakes!!
 Can you see? Sparks and ashes create a murk,
 The gloom, a huge cloud, starts to grow;
 From the crags, like a crowd, streams of lava spurt
 With black shadows and ruddy glow.

**Their cloaks are like clouds o'er the world of the blind,
Their feet like a threatening fear.
Lightning flashes above them like sickles shine,
And their sickles like lightning appear.
The earth is trembling beneath their tread.
Woe to those, who as blind as a mole,
Try to close with their hands earth's lips of red—
The earthquake's wide-gaping hole.**

1966

Byelorussian Song

Where's my land? It is where Byelovezha rustles and
flowers,
And where Nieman at sundown recalls the spilt enemy blood,
Where on Novogrudskiye hills slumber stern old towers,
And the cherry-drowned huts stand gazing on Dnieper's wide
flood.
It is there, where the Pripet's blue ribbon caressingly
sweeps,
Where St. Sophia floats o'er the Dvina, a ship on the tide,
Where my heart, with my very first step, like a hammer
beats,
And although deaf and blind I should find my way to her
side.
More than blind—even dead I'll recall the beaming of
stars
High above the red river, the flickering flight of the
bats,
White sails on blue lakes, proud as seas, and the gleaming
of spars,
And the oceans of pine-woods, and sky-bays of flowering
flax.

Where's my land? It is there where the people will never
be slaves,
Such as bear the hard yoke for their bread without hope
in view,
Where strapping young fellows grow sturdy as oaken staves,
And the men hard as rocks,—you strike them, your sword
breaks in two.
Where's my land? It is there where my forebears sleep
sound 'neath the pines,
Where the women are like happy dreams in the hay, sweet
and soft,
And the girls are like sunshine thro' rain, and grey
mothers one finds,
Like the autumn harvest in cob-webs, a kind sun aloft.
And it's where our immortal songs roll full-throatedly yet,
Where from time immemorial our tongue rings like tempered
steel—
Our proud language, which even that day we shall not
forget,
When the sun, driving darkness from earth, last time rolls
its wheel.
My dear land! You're red pears in the sunset o'er
grandfather's garth,
Phosphorescent dense host of swift-falling November stars.
You're our flag at which not a soul, not a soul upon earth
We'll let laugh, nor defile, nor forget, nor conquer
in wars.
And we swear by the furrow, the first that we plough in
the field.
And we swear by the last, when from grief we can no longer
stand,
That we'll never,
No never
A single green acre yield,—
That we'll never forsake,
No never forsake
Our dear land!

Sunrise

As in the first days of creation
Darkness with chaos mocks.
The tide and the mists are falling
On the tombstones of gloomy rocks.
You sail mid the waves and you witness
How there, on the rim of the night,
Over you and the world, on broad pinions,
Sail the eagles, bearing the light.
Seeing day's as yet hidden radiance,
Beneath heaven's wide tent they float,
As the gold-red sun, through the pass-way,
Like an avalanche, pours down the slope.
Robin Hood's fellows follow in millions,
And take up the fight with the gloom,
In their forest-green tattered raiment,
With gold spears, which spell its doom.
And above the overwhelmed darkness,
As witness of deathless spring,
Triumphantly float on the breezes
Green tatters, which victory sing.
The lie of nocturnal delirium,
The fear of the moss-grown height,
Crawl away, to die in dark caverns,
With broken crests, from the fight.
And with drops from his endless rainbow,
Reviving dead rocks on the way,
Mighty Sol from the sky comes descending,
On a sunny golden ray.
The seductive songs of the sirens
O'er the sunlit waters sound,
And merrily play the dolphins
Among merry people around.
And to him, the one and only,
My heart as a gift I bring—
In this world the single godhead.
In this world the single king.

MIKOLA KHVEDAROVICH



MIKOLA KHVEDAROVICH was born in 1904, in the settlement of Kopyl, in the Minsk province. He took an active part in the establishment of the Komsomol organisation in the Republic. He was editor of the *Red Byelorussia* journal.

His first verses were published in 1926. Later a series of collections appeared: *Moods, Rhythms and Wartime Songs, Contrasting Tempos, War for Peace, Peeling Pine Forests*, and others.

He translated into Byelorussian a series of Pushkin's works, Shota Rustaveli's poem *The Knight in the Panther's Skin* (in conjunction with the poet A. Zvonak), and the verses of Shandor Petefi.

All of Which We Are Dreaming
Lovage

All of Which We Are Dreaming

All of which we are dreaming
In life will certainly be.
Passing through life—without aging—
Is not crossing a river you see.

Not like a misty river
My road through life took form—
Like seas and oceans a-quiver
Where ships are sunk in the storm.

Waves, I have tasted and tried them,
Stormy and wild as can be—
Those same waters so briny,
That same everyday sea.

Waves with white crests a-foaming
The ocean toward me sent,
But to my aid was coming
Many a trusty friend.

Now I can hardly believe it,
That I have survived the storm,
No longer roaring and heaving
Furious breakers are born.

That I stood watch, on guard there,
When ice-floes broke with a groan—
That shores of the distant harbour
Now are my permanent home.

Rough and smooth was my road there,
Transparent it was, and bright,
Full, even brimming over
With sorrows and sparkling light.

So, though my hair is greying,
I must travel the road I've begun,
Lucid sincerity showing,
And staying for ever young.

1956

Lovage

The misty morning glances into the hut,
The empty stork's nest up on the roof is dumb.
In through the window blows the bitter mint,
Which carried on autumn's skirts from the fields has come.

The stove is roaring away with its resinous logs,
The water is seething in the enormous pot.
On the drying shelf the sweet green lovage lies
Which grew by the fence around our garden plot.

The lovage, the lovage, on sultry summer nights
With wonderful scented flowers perfumes the path.
The mistress brews them up in wooden tubs,
And in the fragrant water the children bath.

Grow up, you youngster, and love your native land.
Take care of your parents, treasure them every hour....
By the garden fence the umbels of lovage stand,
Its leaves are green,
And love is coming in flower.

1967

KASTUS KIREYENKA



KASTUS KIREYENKA was born in 1918 in a peasant family, in the village of Gaishin, in the Mogilyov province. He graduated from the literary faculty of the Gomel Teachers' Training College, and became a teacher. During the Great Patriotic War he took part in the defence of Moscow and in the liberation of Byelorussia and Poland, and was a correspondent of an Army newspaper. He now works as chief editor of the literary journal *The Flame*.

He began to appear in print in 1939. His first book of verses came out immediately after the war, in 1945. Since then he has published a series of books of poetry. He also writes for children, and is laureate of the Yanka Kupala Literary Prize.

The Morning Goes Forth!
After the Storm
The Thyme's Wild Scent
"The darkness fell..."



The Morning Goes Forth!

What's that? What's that heard far in the trees?
A chorus, maybe,—someone sings?
The wind, now awake, with his gentle breeze
Strums on the willows, and tries in the reeds
His dulcimer strings.

What's that? What's that which shines in the dark?
It's glimmer unfading is seen.
A star is seeking a burnt-out star;
Above the wide Sozha soars stiff and stark
A lighthouse of green.

Where's that? Where's that fugitive cuckoo's song?
Do you hear it—Cuck-oo-oo, cuck-oo-oo?
Mother strokes in his cradle her laddie strong,
A girl through the night for her lover longs—
To him ever true.

And wider, and wider, a splashing swell,
The morn's noisy chorus pealed.
There the dawn was washing the distant dell,
There the early light in white petals fell,
On forest and field.

What's that, what's that which in mead and glade,
By path and by river ford,
With brilliant smile, devilish handsome besides,
Though seeming by stealth, yet daringly strides?
That's the morning goes forth!

1941

After the Storm

When overhead there roars the stormy thunder,
A-screeching o'er the ruins of her nest,
Her eaglets counting, then the eagle mother

Hides those still living underneath her wing,
And screams for those, with hopeless hope despairing,
Whose helpless bodies on the rocks winds fling.

Long, long the storm has passed. The skies are clearing,
But still she waits: she thinks her sons will come,
And gazes far, into the darkness peering:

Perhaps they somewhere found a sheltering home,
And sweetly sleep, and mother's mournful wailing
At least disturbs their sleep, and makes them moan.

And only in the morn, on cliffside naked,
The rain dried by the sun with scarce a trace,
She dropped her sorrowing head, so tired and aching,

Then rose again. And in the thunder's wake
She hurled her curses at the flying lightning,
Which all the whole wide world had made to shake.

And on the dawn-cold rocks her hot tears crying,
She gave her mother's love to those alive,
That soon their wings with stormclouds might start fighting.

1946

The Thyme's Wild Scent

I don't understand or know
What I am doing today:
From the fields as I went home
I managed to lose my way.

By the birch I should have gone—
By the oak I went.
How my head goes spinning on
With the thyme's wild scent!

Wandered off then into the wood,
 Somewhere through the grass.
 Can't recall now, it's no good,
 How I met Ignas.

But Ignas—not much he said—
 Brow all serious bent....
 Do not spin so, silly head,
 With the thyme's wild scent.

When he only looked at me
 My heart throbbed, eyes went dim.
 What is wrong with me? And why
 Did I lean upon him?

Why so soft the words he said?
 What could they have meant?
 Spinning, spinning goes my head
 With the thyme's wild scent.

Heaven glowed above the trees
 As the red sun set.
 By the spring, my heart at ease,
 With my dear I sat.

Only one old peaceful oak—
 Spring, ah spring's green tent!—
 Knows the secret things we spoke,
 And the thyme's wild scent.

What shall I tell mother now—
 Midnight's on the turn—
 How explain it to her, how?
 She's so kind—but stern.

What to say, and how to hide
 Odours the oak-tree lent?
 In the hut I've brought beside
 With me the thyme's wild scent....

* * *

The darkness fell—

so full of nightingales,
As even in my youth I'd not heard sing....
My heart was trembling mid these miracles,
As if it were some songster's silver wing.

They trill and trill, as if they will escape
Into the night,
To freedom,
Far away.

They gladly will all kinds of joy create
For me to hear—I only have to say.

I dumbly sit, held by some secret sign,
Within the stirring lyric stillness here—
It seems again

beside the stream, the pine,
The bonfires of my distant youth burn clear.

And nightingales sing—

with warbling silver souls,
Still clearer, clearer—

as the dawning nears....

And I arise.... Good-day, my happiness calls,
With forty ringing springs

flew forty years!...

YAKUB KOLAS



YAKUB KOLAS (1882-1956) is the pseudonym of Konstantin Mikhailovich Mickiewicz. He was born on the Akinchitsy farm, in the Minsk province, in a forester's family. He finished the national school, and then a seminary for teachers. He worked in the Pinsk region, where the first Russian revolution of 1905 found him. He took an active part in the struggle against the autocracy. For his revolutionary work among the peasants, he was thrown in gaol. In 1910 his first collection of verse, *Songs of Sorrow*, appeared. "At that time," he writes in his diary, "Alexei Maximovich Gorky highly valued the work of Yanka Kupala and myself...."

After the Great October Revolution he took an active part in building up the cultural life of the Republic, linking his literary work with wide social, state, scientific and pedagogical activities.

He was deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR, and of the Byelorussian SSR, a member of the All-Union Slav Committee, and president of the Byelorussian Republic Peace Committee.

Right from the establishment of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences, he was its permanent vice-president.

The many-sided creative work of Yakub Kolas, who just like Yanka Kupala became a founder of Soviet Byelorussian literature, his verses, longer poems, stories and tales, plays and publicistic works have become part of the golden treasury of Byelorussian national culture. In 1926, on the 20th anniversary of his literary work, he was named People's Poet of Byelorussia. He was also twice awarded the USSR State Literary Prize.

Do Not Beg, and Don't Expect
To Byelorussians
Our Folk Will Win

Harvest

"Take Your Place at the Back!"

Brewing Storm

"The people all groan from the weight
of the sword..."

To My People

The Voice of the Land

A Genius Lives Among Us

Do Not Beg, and Don't Expect

Do not beg, and don't expect
Cheerful ballads from my lyre,
For, when I strike up my song,
Sorrow burns more fierce than fire.

I would laugh and joke with you,
And for you some fun would make,
But I look on life around,
And my heart begins to ache.

How unhappy is our lot:
We were given not a thing.
Do not seek the meadow flower,
For to us there came no spring.

1904

To Byelorussians

Rise, my lads, arise, my brothers!
Rise, you too, beloved land!
In our huts the spring breeze flutters,
See, a bright new life's at hand.

Have our arms, my lads, grown weakened?
Has God given us no strong hearts?
Has no light of freedom beacons
Over our dear native parts?

Let us work in massive numbers,
Stand together, like a wall,
And, reviving from its slumbers,
Our dear country with us all!

1906

Our Folk Will Win

We stumble onward, faltering,
Like drunkards feebly staggering,
With hunger closely quartering,
Our bones in rags go rattling.

We're cursed at, made a mockery,
Begrimed with quagmire constantly,
Aggrieved by rich society,
As prisoners bound involuntary.

In marshlands we are billeted,
In narrow straits are limited,
Our eyes are blindfold blanketed,
Our ears are blocked, inhibited.

One thing we know with certainty:
Though wandering on with difficulty,
Yet, nonetheless, though tardily,
We shall attain our liberty.

1907

Harvest

To village women

Scant is the rye, and of weeds half the portion,
Ears are not weighted with seed t'wards the soil.
Sad was the hour, and full of misfortune,
When you cast grain in the ground with such toil.

Off then you went to the fields with your sickles,
Some in bast slippers,—barefoot otherwise.
Ryefields were rustling, all thin ears and prickles,
They brought no solace to poor women's eyes.

Panting, you heaved up the sheaves in their places,
Stooks in their bundles you women arranged.
Agéd grandmothers, with brown sun-burned faces,
Silent young girls in hard labour engaged.

Scorching, the field. Phew! The heat is so plaguing.
Work is exhausting, unendingly hard!
Shoulders and spines begin painfully aching,
Hands holding sickles feel lifeless as wood.

Grasped is the rye, and the ears closely gathered,
Handfuls are cut—and the reaper unbends.
Rye sheaves are placed on the straw-twist and tethered....
Difficult, reaper, the work of your hands!

Still lies the field in the noon sunshine blazing.
Oh, for some corner where shadows are shed!
Only from cradles the cries of the babies,
Only the gad-flies still buzz overhead....

1908

“Take Your Place at the Back!”

My poor life's a misery,
All gone off the track.
Everywhere they yell at me:
“Take your place at the back!”

My dear God in heaven!
How I writhe, like a snake,
But when I thrust forward:
“Take your place at the back!”

Once I started courting,
Match-maker wasn't slack.
Only got our nose in—
“Take your place at the back!”

True, the girl was pretty,
But Kondrat looked black,
Quickly stuck his leg out:
"Take you place at the back!"

Found myself in the city,
Parade-square people pack,
Wormed toward the procession:
"Take your place at the back!"

My wheat-strip stood empty,
Hailstones beat it flat.
"Grant me a loan, village-elder!"
"Take your place at the back!"

Haven't got a penny,
Work is what I lack.
"Any jobs a-going?"
"Take your place at the back!"

I'm in rags and tatters,
Ribbs show through and crack.
"Lend a hand, good people!"
"Take your place at the back!"

My son's sharp, needs schooling—
Should get his fair whack.
"Here's my laddie, gentlemen!"
"Take your place at the back!"

Bread was sent to the village,
I stood by with my sack.
"I am one of the starving!"
"Take your place at the back!"

I've a head on my shoulders:
A deputy I would make.
"You've no qualifications."
"Take your place at the back!"

Every dog has his day, though,
And I'll tell you blunt—
Twice to me happened
To be called to the front!

We rebelled in the village.
Hard times made us grunt:
District police paid a visit—
“Step out you to the front!”

“So you're the instigator?
Villainous little runt!
Hey there, village policeman!
Let him through to the front!”

1908

Brewing Storm

Night fills the skies, and the darkness comes crowding,
Mid rushes an anxious discussion is born.
Frightened the feather-grass whispers, the boughs then,
The moon in the gloom hides her golden horn.

On the horizon sheet-lightning is flying,
By thunder is shaken the threatening cloud.
Dark settles down and more leaden is lying....
Roar then you storm, roar loud, yet more loud!

1912

* * *

The people all groan from the weight of the sword,
 And ice stills their burning breast.
The road is open to you, nature's lord,
 To the south, to the east, to the west.

You are free now, poor peasant, to go where you please,
 You may shatter the yoke, and move.
 You've sensitive ears, and eagle's sharp eyes,
 And with youthful hearts you may love.

You were crushed in the fight, in the dark had to yield,
 And your eagle's eyes have grown old,
 An unholy force led you forth on the field,
 And the fire in your hearts has grown cold.

For what do you yearn, you restless folk?
 Look what vistas await you yet!
 Be worthy of freedom, be stone, be oak,
 You'll know joy, and will cast off regret....

1917

To My People

To the plains, to the wide open space
 Go out, my dear folk, in your mass—
 For a hundred new colourful ways
 Life is spreading for you to pass!

Your new fate is now breaking with dawn,
 You will live without landlord's bane:
 Their day has now faded and gone,
 And they'll never return again.

And look at the wide world around;
 The palace, the castle lie still.
 It's all yours: the meadow, the land—
 In the palace set up a new school.

Then step boldly and brightly ahead
 With us on the same single road:
 Our Party the people has led
 And lifted from them their load.

To the plains and the wide open space
Go out, my dear folk, in your mass—
Many new and most happy ways
Life is spreading for you to pass!

1939

The Voice of the Land

I hear a voice, a call resounding—
My native land to me appeals,
And cuts my heart-strings, deeply wounding,
And rings like scythes in grassy fields.

The groan of oaks, the moan of pastures,
The sob of springs, the water's woe,
The silent look of miry marshes,
All bring me news about the foe.

I see the figure of the Teuton—
Cold creature, beast who cannot feel.
He knows no pity, law's forgotten,
Grinds all beneath his armoured heel.

Oh, had I but such arms one moment,
I would embrace you, native land,
Console your sorrow, ease your torment,
Fight with all power at my command.

My country, land of my affection!
I hear your bells which summon me.
Accept, at least, your son's prediction—
Not long is your captivity.

In wrath your forest start to mutter,
With vengeance breaks the dawning light,
And day your dismal dark will scatter—
You're served by many a sturdy knight!

1941

A Genius Lives Among Us

From the depths of the people's creative spirit
 He came, like the dawning, to us.
Of the people's wisdom he felt the full merit,
 And fulfilled its orders thus.

With prophetic pupils he saw far horizons,
 Which for others lay still concealed.
Ah, Lenin, he planned and marked out the highways
 To new justice and truth in the world.

On vast constructions, on fields collective,
 The seal of his truth is found,
And his words of wisdom, so clear and effective,
 Like living music resound.

They sound in the roar, when the young generation
 Reveal their strength deep and wide,
In the songs and thoughts of the peaceful nation,
 Like the sun, like the prophets of life.

He lives on among our Red Army men peerless,
 And shares in their feats every hour,
To the heroes' hearts, to wills free and fearless.
 His name gives an added power.

Among us lives Lenin, like sunshine, like morning,
 The greatest of sages on earth.
And sheds living rays, his fire ever burning,
 So that folk should know gladness and mirth.

KANDRAT KRAPIVA



KANDRAT KRAPIVA was born in 1896, in the village of Nizok, in the Minsk province. He worked as a teacher. He took part in the Civil War, and in the struggle against the interventionists. He studied at the philological faculty of the Byelorussian State University.

During the Great Patriotic War he worked with the front-line press, and was editor of a satirical newspaper and poster publication *Crush the Fascist Swine!* After the war he edited the humorous and satirical journal *Hedgehog*, and worked as director of the Institute of Linguistics under the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences.

In conjunction with Yakub Kolas he took part in editing the first Russian-Byelorussian Dictionary. In 1926 this work appeared, containing approximately 90,000 words.

He was vice-president of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences, and deputy to the Byelorussian Supreme Soviet.

His first satirical verses and feuilletons appeared in 1922. He later published a few books of fables. He became particularly well known as a dramatist, the author of comedies and satirical plays.

He is People's Writer of the Byelorussian SSR, and twice received the USSR State Literary Prize.

Grandad and Baba
Close Relations
Fritz's Trophy

Grandad and Baba

Grandad drove to the bazaar
On the cart with Baba.
Horse looked quite up to par,
But pulled weakly, rather.

She was not yet two years grown,
So the neighbours figured.
Baba—she weighed seventeen stone—
Or may I be jiggered!

On the hills, or in the mud
Horse started lagging.
Baba helped her all she could—
Sitting on the waggon!

Horse two years old, not more—
Baba—round as a cabbage—
Stamped her foot on the foreboard floor
Hard as she could manage.

“Hey, give over, stupid, there!”
Grandad tells the old lady,
“You’re as much help to the mare
As the glanders, maybe!”

“Oh, you’re just a daft old man!”
Baba rates in a flurry—
“Stick there, then, and be you damned!
Little I should worry!”

From the cart in a rage she drops,
Sits by the roadside, shaking.
Horse like the devil makes off
Where four legs can take her.

In establishments you’ll find
Such fat Babas often.

Seemingly, they're working, mind,
But the effect is rotten.

Such a Baba you can't miss—
Speak to her in this fashion:
"Things are difficult as it is—
Climb down off the waggon!"

1925

Close Relations

For any friend or close relation
The willow sometimes will bear pears,
The billy-goat give milk on occasion,
And if you don't believe it, dears,
Then facts will soon convince you so then.
Just yesterday—two days ago, then,
I heard the Sow here praise her friend the Goat,
A hundred times straight off, or more,
She lauded him—that's not the thing to note—
The question is—what was it for?
She gathered all the Calves around her,
And cleared her throat:
"You know," she asked, "my friend the Goat?
Well, have you seen his beard? Astounding!
And those forked horns of his in front!
Fine lad! And what a worker, too!
Umph! Umph! Grunt! Grunt!
He works just like an ox, you see,
Or rather three!
You go yourselves and ask the Ewe....
Don't you believe, dears, what I tell?
He even gives rich milk as well!"
But then the Calves replied severely:
"Don't try to fool us, Aunty, really!
Drink Billy-Goat's milk, get fat dear Sow,
But we prefer the milk from a Cow!

As for his being a worker, and all that biz—
It's clear as two twos making four
That you're a close relation of his—
Two creatures from one stall, what's more!"

1927

Fritz's Trophy

"On to Moscow, that's your route—"
Fritz got information.
And he boldly answered "Gut!—
Get-rich-quick vacation!"

Honey, butter, sugar, lard,
Hitlerites find appealing.
Fritz, he stuffs his stomach hard—
Master-hand at stealing.

He knows how to "organise"
Boots and shoes and dresses.
Moscow open to him lies—
In two days he guesses.

Like a ribbon runs the road,
Leading on to Moscow.
Fritzes both the ditches crowd,
Stiffening in the frost, though.

Fritz's empty bullet-head
Every day hangs lower.
Moscow's not so far, they said.
Death, however, is closer!

Fritz awaits fresh woes each day,
In the trenches sitting.
Fascist ranks, they melt away,
Thinning, ever thinning.

Twenty five were left alive,
 Maybe, altogether.
 Fritz, however, chanced to find
 Boots of good calf-leather.

He had done the best he could
 In this morning's scrimmage.
 He by force dragged off each boot
 From Ivan in his village....

Stealthily then crept up Ivan
 To the fascist robber,
 With a pistol in one hand,
 And a grenade in the other.

Took a breath—then swung his arm—
 Thunder-clap and lightning!...
 And in horror and alarm
 Fritz's eyes went widening.

Waggon wheels bump on the fields,
 Smoke-pall, air all dusty.
 Fritz is going home, half-killed,
 To his native country.

He has done his very best—
 The boots he carried off, so.
 Only he's without his legs.
 Those—he left near Moscow.

ARKADZ KULYASHOU



ARKADZ KULYASHOU was born in the village of Samotsevichi, in the Mogilyov province, in 1914. He graduated from the Teachers' Training School, and studied at the literary faculty of the Minsk Pedagogical Institute. He worked in the editorial offices of the republic's newspapers and journals. From the first days of the war he joined the ranks of the Soviet Army, and worked for the Army press. After the war he edited the *Literature and Art* gazette, and worked as the head of the scenario department of the Byelorussiafilm Studios.

He first appeared with verses in 1926, and went on to issue a series of books of verse and longer poems. His collected works have also been published. The verses given in this anthology are from the poet's *New Book*.

In recent years he has been fruitfully working in the field of translation. He has rendered into Byelorussian *The Song of Hiawatha* by Longfellow, Lermontov's lyrics, *The Eneid* in Kotlyarevsky's parodied version, and verses by Rasul Gamzatov, Kaisyn Kuliyeu and others.

He is a People's Poet of Byelorussia, and laureate of the Yanka Kupala Prize, as well as deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR.

He has twice been awarded the USSR State Literary Prize.

The Ballad of the Four Hostages To Poetry

"I would bury my love..."

At Half a Milliard Kilometres

Elegy

"There is for every poet his plot to harrow..."

"We've broken all the laws of gravitation..."

"No, I shall never snatch the stars from heaven..."

"Not just one month I perish from inaction..."

"I owe my mother all — my name at table..."

The Ballad of the Four Hostages

They took them from parts they loved dearly—
 The four,
 Under guard,
 From their cabin.
 The elder girl, fourteen barely,
 Scarcely three, the younger laddie.
 They drove Minai's sister, their auntie,
 Along with them, down in the cellar.
 Minai—he was their dear father
 Their parent,
 The people's avenger.
 Of his squad,
 His guerrilla formation,
 The Germans wrote in their papers.
 Then a note of intimidation
 They sent round to all his neighbours.
 "You're a partisan commander,"
 The order said, with severity,
 "You must promptly surrender,
 And tender
 Yourself to the German authority...."
 And on all the surrounding quarters,
 On Minai's wooden hut were nailed notices:
 "If you fail to yield straightway, as ordered,
 We shall shoot your three children as hostages."

His three youngsters, a pitiful party,
 Awaited their fate in the cellar,
 And with them remained their auntie.
 How those savages did torment her!...
 The youngest lad, innocent, wonders,
 With his fair little head on her shoulder:
 "But why are there bars at the windows,
 And that man with a gun, that rough soldier?
 Will our Daddy, then, soon come to fetch us?"
 "Soon!" she answered the poor little fellow.
 "He will take us all home together.

When he comes, we'll go back through the meadow."
 "But why's he so long?" sadly, gently,
 He asks as his eyelids droop lower.
 "Sleep, my pet!" consoling says auntie,
 Awaiting their fatal hour.

When he slept, with her eyes full of sorrow,
 Auntie told them all, without hiding,
 What the youngest knew not—that tomorrow
 In the grave they would all be lying.
 "He's quite tiny, and understands nothing.
 Let him sleep, he's lost and bewildered,"
 In a voice full of silent suffering
 Auntie told Minai's other children.
 He sleeps fitfully. Restless his breathing—
 It seems
 Prison dreams
 Scare the laddie.
 "It's all slimy here—mousies go creeping.
 But why have you left us, then, Daddy?"

"Sleep, my little one, sleep till the dawning.
 Soon the sun will rise over the forest.
 Sleep, your Daddy won't come now till morning...."
 For that
 He had no father's warrant....

Night passes.
 The sun slowly rises.
 The skylark sings high in the heavens.
 They're led off
 By a squad, through the daisies,—
 The tot loves the sun and the meadows....

By the wall all were stood, then their butcher
 Took his gun, aimed it first at the tiniest,
 At the heart of the little creature.
 A shot.
 The fair head fell lifeless.

And again he took aim with his rifle.
On the wall—the hostages' shadows.
That was all....

.
Before such as Minai was
Bow your heads in respect, all you Daddies.

1942

To Poetry

Your captive I, and you — my bolted tower,
By love I'm sentenced to a life in jail.
In vain my term imprisoned in your power
You hasten to annul, or to curtail.

In vain your prisoner's guard by half you lessen,
Having ensnared another with your love,
I see no spark of sense in such decision,
Ridiculous will your intentions prove.

With few guards even, I'll not try escaping,
But I shall rattle still my chains a bit,
My daily walking-spell apportioned taking,
And hungering, and incarcerated sit.

To part me from my words you're not enacted,
Nor have you power to change my future fate,
You have not chosen me—but I your captive
Have chosen you for life—without a date.

1960

* * *

I would bury my love,
As a soldier does treachery in war,
If a trench for a grave
And the order there only were.

And a table at least,
For the wakes, and consent for last rites;
A quiet dale I would seek,
Under aspen-tree's tented green heights.

Were the sod stern and dour,
Yet with sapper's stout spade I would work,
To forget evermore
Wounding thoughts of disloyalty dark.

So my scars would be numb,
So their smarting be cooled 'neath cold clay.
But my conscience is dumb,
My sole captain has nothing to say.

He thinks thus—and aright—
Not for vengeance the oath you have sworn.
But to go forth and fight,
With the banner devotedly borne.

We who fought the war through,
Who in battle great sacrifice made,
One who's fallen, it's true,
We can't kill and inter in the grave.

Can one really compel
The disloyal and faithless to love?
Can one bury as well
The disloyal, with no word from above?

Still for her, all the same,
Your true love will a sexton become,
And the years a stout spade.
And your heart, turned to stone, be her tomb

At Half a Milliard Kilometres

My life-time times the speed of sound—
Check the result when multiplied.
Then can you tell me, science, expound
From whence returns now, rarefied,

The forest-prophet's cuckoo-note,
Which roused me first from sleepy ways,
Once set me wandering on my road,
For many, many thousand days?

Through ageless forests I have gone,
Now stand enchanted by their voice,
Half-milliard kilometres on,
Where paths of past and future cross.

You call—the time which was responds
With plaintive pipe from pine-tree's shade;
Press on—with heavy footstep sounds
Your future marching on ahead.

Your pathway to the start comes round,
And parting—to new meeting place,
The plaintive pipe—to trumpet's sound,
The source of life—to life's decease.

1961

Elegy

My life was one long strife with grievous years—
The further fought—the longer roadside rests.
My verses pull like dump-trucks through the gears,
I know the hour will come, the hour which tests,

When not with dreams will branchy forest pines
O'ershadow things which on the road I feared;

But bowing, and not hiding evil grins,
My years will greet me, each one with a beard.

Why have they come, this hoary-haired array?
What kind of wonder wait? I still survive!
And having pushed their bushy beards away,
Still leaning on my stick, I stand alive.

For all my years I'll count on in good faith,
Upon my journey's each remaining day.
My last breath, like a bone, I'll throw to Death,
Beyond that threshold where her sleep holds sway.

1961

* * *

There is for every poet his plot to harrow
Among the fields where never plough made way,
Where, bending low his back, he heaves his furrow
From early morn, till ending of the day.

There are the seeds of thought he takes in earnest
In both his hands along life's lengthy lane.
To them is given to come to fruit in harvest
And wave like ripened rye, gold bays of grain.

There is a heart, without whose youth, affection,
Without whose feeling, full of life and warm,
Nothing remains to him: no field of action,
No fruitful thoughts, no life in any form.

There is responsibility, stern and narrow,
Before his rigorous verse, from start to end,
That, having with his first line cut his furrow,
With his sixteenth a full sheaf he may bind.

1962

* * *

We've broken all the laws of gravitation,
Like planet flung from planet it appears:
We live, my love, in mutual separation,
Like world and anti-world among the spheres.

One single orbit we can never follow,
We share no bread, we only share the salt,
With a half-mocking smile you meet my sorrow,
And suffer when my suffering finds a halt.

My most sincere approaches you resisted,
And from dissent most hurtful never ceased.
It seems, if I have turned round to the westward,
Then you have straightway turned round to the east.

And yet this world of mine would be an orphan.
My universe be cloaked in darkness drear,
If you in anger should ignite, blast-off then,
And with the speed of light should disappear.

1962

* * *

No, I shall never snatch the stars from heaven,
No flowers shall I pluck from field nor lea,
Which, like a gift to a beloved one given,
You should, with favouring nod, accept from me.

But let the flowers on the heath stay scattered,
That you and I may wander mid them still.
By evening, in the vase, they're pale and tattered,
Like us within a sunless, dumb, stone wall.

The stars are far—on them in a millenium
Even the swiftest steed could not alight.
I'd whizz off in a rocket of aluminium,
But it's too late to send me off in flight.

The load upon my heart would be past bearing,
Within my breast my motor would lose power.
It's swallowed so much dust from road and clearing—
Accept it with no star, and with no flower!

1962

* * *

Not just one month I perish from inaction,
Not two, nor three.... Time lags and nags and stings!
I'd rather seek by hanging self-extinction,
Than live for unimportant, petty things.

The fuse has gone—and in my heart I ponder,
The doctors cannot help me any way.
I'll lose my reason, I can hope no longer,
That in this life there'll be a brighter day.

But time itself flows onward, health restoring:
From out its fount, its life-sustaining charm,
It brings me sixteen lines, my sickness curing,
Sixteen drops of wonder-working balm.

Sixteen pathways on a page of paper,
As things I love, live on to hold their place,
Sixteen steps to progress in my labour,
Sixteen arms, the whole world to embrace.

1962

* * *

I owe my mother all—my name at table,
My home here, in our numerous family crew,
And my *koliska*—that's my rocking cradle,
The hand-carved wooden spoon, and soup-bowl too,
All in the house, which to her toil is due.

I'm mother's cradle song. I'm mother's care.
I'm mother's wrath, which set camp-fires alight,
And drove back Death, back westwards—to her lair
With whips of TNT till victory broke.
The roads of seven fronts trailed clouds of smoke
Behind me, like the fuse of dynamite.

And I, having cut short the siren's cry,
I'll not let atom bombs lay all to waste,
And turn the world to a warren of refuge-caves,
A million names to dust—a casualty list,
A million cradles—to a million graves.

1963

YANKA KUPALA



YANKA KUPALA (1882-1942) is the pseudonym of Ivan Dominikovich Lutsevich. He was born on Vyazynka farm, in the family of a landless peasant. He graduated from the national school. His childhood and youth were spent, in the poet's own words, "on foreign soil, in perpetual dependence, and under the oppression of the Polish landlords".

He went out into the world to find his living. He studied in Petersburg (now Leningrad) where he took general educational courses. He worked on the newspaper *Our Fields*, and in 1914-15 was its editor and frequent contributor.

The beginning of his literary career is tied up with the first Russian revolution. In May 1905, in the progressive Minsk gazette *Northwestern Borderland* (that was how Byelorussia was known before the revolution) Kupala's first poem *A Peasant* was printed.

After the Great October Revolution he took an active part in building up the cultural life of the Republic, in the creation of a national theatre, the foundation of the first Byelorussian University, of the Republic's Academy of Sciences, and of book-publishing.

In connection with the 20th anniversary of his literary activities, which was festively celebrated by the whole country in May 1925, Yanka Kupala was awarded (for the first time in the Republic) the honorary title of People's Poet. Kupala's poetry and plays present a whole epoch in the cultural development of the Byelorussian people. His poetry is more than highly artistic verses—it is an original encyclopaedia of the life of his people, depicting its character, its customs, its thoughts and hopes, its struggle and its victory.

The works of Kupala have been translated into numerous languages of the Soviet peoples, and many foreign ones.



A Peasant
What I Saw
But Who Marches There?
"I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!.."
Clouds and Thoughts
Fading...
To My Girl
Betrothal
Out Now!
For All
To Byelorussian Partisans

A Peasant

That I'm a peasant, all must know,
And far and near—the world's like that—
I'm met with jibes where'er I go—
Sure, I'm a peasant, a simple chap.

No alphabet I know, and so
My tongue but roughly starts to clap,
And all my life I plough and sow—
Sure, I'm a peasant, a simple chap.

By heavy toil I gain my bread,
Put up with curses, take the rap.
I've never a chance to rest instead—
Sure, I'm a peasant, a simple chap.

Without a crust my children cry,
My wife's in rags, without a wrap.
Without a penny I get by—
Sure, I'm a peasant, a simple chap.

The bitter sweat drips in my eyes,
And old or young, it's my mishap
To work the whole day, oxen-wise—
Sure, I'm a peasant, a simple chap.

In sickness and in need I lie:
I cure myself somehow, mayhap!
For me no doctor will come nigh—
Sure, I'm a peasant, a simple chap.

And naked, I'm condemned to rot,
Like forest mushrooms, from the scab,
Or like a mangy dog to drop—
Sure, I'm a peasant, a simple chap.

But if my life is swiftly sped,
 Or if I live a longer span,
 I never, brother, shall forget
 That, though a peasant, I'm a man!

And if I'm asked by anyone,
 They'll hear one cry I always give:
 Although I'm scorned by everyone—
 Sure, I'm a peasant—I shall live!

1905

What I Saw

I saw how the wind on the ploughed field played,
 Blew the soil away, and the silver birch swayed,
 And with drifting sand over meadows danced,
 And broke from the birch its living branch.

I saw how the hawk destroyed the dove,
 And tore out her heart, and drank her warm blood;
 The dove cooed and called, and cried in despair;
 The whirlwind blew feathers and bones in the air.

I saw an unfortunate maiden fair,
 How she ran to the river, and drowned herself there!
 The wind-driven waves hid the tracks of the maid;
 On the shore the alder-tree rustled: "Betrayed!"

I saw all these things—in my soul was dismay,
 The smile left my lips and my song died away,
 I sobbed and wept sorrowful tears unstayed,
 Alone, for the birch-tree, the dove, the maid.

1906

But Who Marches There?

But who marches there, but who marches there
In such an enormous horde of despair?
—Byelorussians.

But what do they bear on their scraggy backs,
With bleeding hands, and with feet shod in bast?
—Their injustice.

But where do they bear their injustice to,
But where do they bear it in open view?
—To all people.

But what, then, taught these, many million strong,
To rouse up from sleep, and bear forth their wrong?
—Need and sorrow.

But what then, but what had these paupers in mind,
Suppressed through the centuries, deaf and blind?
—To be called humans.

1907

* * *

I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!
In leisure hour my song I write,
Which in my heart lies slumbering low—
I rouse it up, bring forth to light.
I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!

I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!
I'm often of all peace bereft,
When in my eyes bright teardrops grow,
With sorrow which my soul has swept—
I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!

I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!
 My youth's best days I squander so,
 In one eternal war with woe,
 Life's happiness I do not know—
 I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!

I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!
 To raise a crop of words I haste,
 Upon my empty land I go,
 On Byelorussian grasslands vast.
 I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!

I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!
 I grieve about my people's fate;
 You'd tread me in the mire below,
 You worthless breed, corrupt and base.
 I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!

I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!
 I sing: but you don't feel my pain.
 Your heart's not touched by pity, though.
 A brother's torment calls in vain.
 You can't be touched by that, oh no!

I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!
 You live so fine, you swill the wine,
 You're dulled by gluttony, and so
 You can't be moved by truths of mine.
 You can't be roused, my lords, oh no!

I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!
 I'm for the poor, in stress and strain,
 I'm one with them in equal woe,
 And fettered by the self-same chain.
 I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!

I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!
 I'm for the ignorant and the sad.
 From them to me responses flow,
 I hear them in the field and glade,
 But not from you, my lords, oh no!

1907

Clouds and Thoughts

Sombre the clouds over heaven's face creep—
 sombre the thoughts which keep me from sleep:
 clouds o'er the hut, and thoughts o'er my soul,
 and there is nowhere to shelter at all.

Sombre the clouds—either snowstorm or rain—
 sombre my thoughts, bringing sorrow and pain:
 so the poor peasant is caught in the strife
 with clouds and with thoughts all the days of his life.

1908

Fading...

Ears of rye no longer swing,
 Sharpened scythes no longer ring,
 Hay to stacks no brown hands bring,
 Only dying leaves take wing,
 On the little firs they cling,
 On the dry and leathery ling.

Heaven's vaults no longer shine,
 Savory grasses do not twine,
 Bird-flocks chirp no cheerful sign,
 Only mists creep up malign,
 Winds above the dumb mound whine,
 Darkly speaks the forest pine.

Nature's power sleeping lies,
 Having dropped its tired eyes,
 Tenderly or scaring cries,
 And the sleepy heart replies,
 And its dream of springtime skies,
 And her traitor's voice now dies.

1909

To My Girl

Do not hasten from me, precious light of my life,
 But have pity, be kind, and a poor orphan nurse;
 And awaken my heart, lull my bad dreams and strife,
 Fill my soul with new songs, and the darkness disperse.

Not one comfort I've known in my miserable days,
 And the sun never peeped in my pitiful hut,
 Only blizzards and storms came to plague all my ways,
 Only often I cursed my unfortunate lot.

So the years followed on, with no joy they were gone,
 Although joy does exist in this world bare and stark:
 That is joy found in love, in the brave fight with wrong.
 So remain, do not fly—be my star in the dark.

You and I on this earth with assured step shall go,
 And shall conquer distress, boldly take up our work,
 Live and love and endure all together, we two,
 For our down-trodden land, our tormented poor folk.

1909

Betrothal

Worn out, not a doubt, by the long tiring walk,
 Beside the tall pine we sat down without talk,
 Like a queen and a king;

The heather, rough as ever, sprang dry at our feet,
The floss of the moss 'neath the cones lay asleep
 Above the dark spring.

On the brushwood the club-moss crept far and near,
And timidly glistened the dew, like a tear

 On long willow leaves:

In his crown, green and brown, grandad forest swayed,
And rustling and wondering wrote laws he had made
 In words none conceives.

For us, quiet as night, twinkled many a light,
The mouldering, smouldering tree-stumps gleamed bright,
 Like soldiers on guard;
And calmy and balmily, down sailed the shade,
Over hill, over dale, and our day had to fade
 As slow minutes passed.

Now lay on time's way the dark, dumb and deep,
And midnight, assistant, went spreading its sleep,
 Unmeaningly mild....

From under pines slender you rose, and I rose....
Above us the rumble of branch-music rolled
 Unconsciously wild....

1911

Out Now!

Rise, my dear country, my motherland captive!
No more to slavish cold slumbers now cling,
No more of crying and sighing inactive—
Out now upon the green fields in your masses,
 Out now to welcome the spring!

Cast off those rags which for years you've been wearing,
Wandering by campfires, through wormwood and ling;
Out from the winter's severe domineering,
Which has above you for ages been jeering—
 Out now to welcome the spring!

Blizzards dug traps for you, snow in a welter
 Scooped out abysses, and pitfalls a string;
 Snowdrifts piled up round your rough nightly shelter....
 See, now, they're melting, the stream's helter-skelter....
 Out now to welcome the spring!

North winds at midnight above you went sweeping,
 Scattered down leaves, and made bare branches swing;
 And from the west the wild beasts all came creeping—
 Tore at your breast.... But still you are breathing—
 Out now to welcome the spring!

Even your children, made blind by injustice,
 Hounded and hunted till death's final sting,
 All were told tales—you were dead as the dust is—
 Only the lie was set right by the sunshine....
 Out now to welcome the spring!

Bright and light-hearted, bedizened with flowers,
 Soar to the heights, like free birds on the wing,
 Pour forth like sunshine, like star-spangled showers,
 Fill with your songs this dear country of ours—
 Out now to welcome the spring!

Briar on your brow for a coronet passes,
 Your only temple—the sky where birds sing,
 Your only kingdom—the meadows and grasses,
 Your only servants—rough hands of the masses....
 Out now... it almost is spring!...

1912

For All

For all, my bread when hungry,
 My bed and board, my share,
 My corner in my country,
 For all hospitable care—

I have repaid my people
As far as in my might:
I called them forth to freedom,
And from the dark to light.

And for my own poor country,
That she her strength should save,
I wrote a hymn of victory
Beside the cross-marked grave.

I battled with disaster,
And for the people's good,
I gave them songs in darkness,
And paid with my heart's blood.

I brought them a goodly portion
Of happiness with my airs.
What more can they ask—what more then,
From this poor poet of theirs?

1926

To Byelorussian Partisans

Partisans, o partisans,
 Sons whom Byelorussia bore!
For the captive, for his chain,
Must the Hitlerites be slain,
 So they never rise once more.

Over graves and burnt-out homes,
 Over blood-stained tracks still fresh,
May the crows call down the crows,
May they count the enemy's bones,
 Make their funeral feast his flesh.

As for Hitler, vampire-bred,
 May the crows peck out his eyes!

He on human flesh has fed,
 He has drunk the blood just let,
 May he die as a wild beast dies!!

He has robbed the aged of sight,
 Women, children, babies slain,
 Like a savage ghoul, his blight
 Turned bright day to darkest night.
 May he die, the evil swine!

Partisans, o partisans,
 Sons whom Byelorussia bore!
 For the captive, for his chain,
 Must the Hitlerites be slain,
 So they never rise once more.

On to victory I call!
 May your future days be fine!
 Cut down these wild cannibals all,
 On our country's sacred soil,
 May they leave no slightest sign!

Ghosts of mothers, children cry,
 And of sires and grandsires slain,
 And the bloodsoaked onslaught sly
 Calls for bloody vengeance high,
 Such as ages have not seen.

Do not give these serpents power
 Over you their coils to spread.
 Dig their graves this very hour,
 From the living tear the bowels,
 Blood for blood, and death for death!

Partisans, o partisans,
 Sons whom Byelorussia bore!
 For the captive, for his chain,
 Must the Hitlerites be slain,
 So they never rise once more.

May your victory come to stay,
 Never leave you, but stand fast.
May alarms not dim your day,
For the partisan's true way
 Leads to freedom, long to last....

From that scum our soil we'll purge,
 Woods and water and the sky,
We'll bring low the fascist scourge,
Soon they'll bow down to the earth,
 Like our gathered ears of rye.

Partisans, o partisans,
 Sons whom Byelorussia bore!
For the captive, for his chain,
Must the Hitlerites be slain,
 So they never rise once more!

1941



MIKOLA KUSYANKOU



MIKOLA KUSYANKOU was born in 1935, in the village of Perarost, in the Gomel region. He graduated from the Secondary Technical School of the Forestry Industry, and worked as a forestry expert and timber assessor.

He first came out with verses in 1959. Since then he has published two books of verse, *Living Sap* and *Without a Halt*.

"A forest lake. A lovely day awaking..."
Our Line
Oil!

* * *

A forest lake. A lovely day awaking.
 The pine, just like a pendulum appears.
 Reflected in the pool, serenely swaying,
 Its verdant crown, above the water rears.
 A zephyr through the wood goes slowly wandering,
 I start to look a little sad around,
 And frequently I find myself a-pondering
 How long ago my clock on earth was wound.
 Oh, if my time would flow a little slower,
 So fine is life on this, my native ground.
 Upon my generation's tree in flower
 May not a trembling yellow leaf be found!
 May orioles whistle in the dawn dew-speckled,
 And nightingales sing beneath nocturnal skies;
 And may the pine for ever stand reflected
 In azure lakes, and in our eager eyes.

1961

Our Line

Construction all round—
 Mid steppeland

and pine.

Now the slogans sound:

This

Is our line.

I fly in the sky
 Over deserts one-time—
 There canals I espy,—
 Are they
 Not our line?

I see in my thoughts
 The tundra malign—

There rails they have brought—
And they are our line.

The oil pipe-line goes
Through the forest blue.
It's called "Friendship", you know,
That's a line of ours, too!

We want friendship
And peace—
That's our one design.
In this land at least,
That is our
Main line.

1963

Oil!

I

Oil! A marvellous fountain flowers
Like a black tree—but far below,
Spreading through old Devonian layers,
From this wonder the root-fibres go.

'Neath the rocks with shocks perceptible
Starts its whole life history:
I see fruit-buds — petro-chemical,
On the branches of that tree.

Gifts that it affords are countless....
So that days grow gay and bright,
Play you black and gushing fountains
In the land where I first saw light.

II

Yellow field and bluish forest,
Meadow green—the scene well-known—

Like a face, Polesye's borders
Artists previously have shown.

But look now—there's oil near Rechitsa;
Pouring forth on the fine white sand,
Flows the fountain—part of the picture,
This black oil of our native land.

III

Oil from the soil! Why, the mere rumour
Our grandfathers had never heard.
Old Polesyans, in ill-humour
Scratched but the surface of dry earth.

Wonders such as this, they likely
Never dreamed of in those hours.
Wells dug for fresh water, might be—
That was the limit of their powers.

Even then, into earth's recesses
Bolsheviks, though, in thought had gazed;
Whole kilometres, through the abysses,
As into a distant age.

ALEG LOIKA



ALEG LOIKA was born in 1931, in Slonim. He finished the philological faculty of the Byelorussian State University, and then ■ post-graduate course. He is Doctor of philology, and professor.

His first book of verse appeared in 1959. He has published ■ whole series of poetic collections, including several books for children.

He is very active as a critic and literary expert, and is the author of several monographs and collections of articles on modern Byelorussian poetry.

"No sooner had the old well-handle creaked..."
"So dear to me this endless great community..."
"And fate prepared me too for war..."
"But I am dozing still and dream..."

* * *

No sooner had the old well-handle creaked
I woke, ran on the porch and took my towel....
Bowed to the waist,—the handle squeaked, and squeaked,—
And drew the water in the maple pail.

It floated up in no great haste, it's true,
Full of the azure blueness of the skies;
As if from subterranean depths it drew
The clouds, the heavens, and my sleepy eyes....

The handle squeaked again: to me it seemed
As pleasant as before, that distant day,
When on my starry path, barefoot, I beamed
And full of fun astride it flew away.

Or as before, when mother and neighbour raced,
In tears of panic, with a bridle rein,
And pulled me from the well, so I never gazed
From down below on stars ashine by day!

The handle's stopped.... The pailful now I pour—
Pure water slowly in the trough let fall
And wash, rejoicing, as not once before,
In water, sky and cloud and well and all.

1958

* * *

So dear to me this endless great community,
I love till tears this planet here,
Which for three thousand millions of humanity
Is like an uninhabited sphere.

The woods, and then beyond the woods, hill country,
And barrow to barrow, like mountains near,

The junipers, greyish-white and bitter stunted,
As if a glacier had flowed here.

But from the hills stretch out such vast horizons,
A man may gaze until he dies....
Where old Zelvyanka in the valley widens,
And wraiths of mist at morning rise.

Where village and nearby village press together,
Like beads on looping river's thread,
And where the bluing strips of forest gather
And merge in heavens distant spread.

And here you get a glad "Good-day!" in greeting,
Warm hearts,
 and hearths,
 bright homes,
 and people meeting.

I haste to greet those dear to me, the peasantry
(A year to see them all, at least! —)
For those three thousand millions of humanity
I know through these around me first!

And what would I have meant for that humanity
Had I not travelled on that road
Which into the wide world winds on expansively
From father's threshold which I trod?

A road where tears and bloodshed flowed together,
And crippling torment, moan on moan,
Which we and predecessors with us, however,
Still for mankind have made a home!

1965

* * *

And fate prepared me too for war
With others and myself, what's more,
A war with stupidity, wood to the core,

A war with frigidity, mean and poor,
A war with duplicity, all kinds in store,
A bloodless, but a death-dealing war.

A war of heart-beats, of nerves worked sore,
When seemingly those who stand before
Are just like you—yet not like you,
But bodgers, hollow through and through.

Then conquer them within your soul,
And rest not till you gain your goal;
With victory o'er yourself, therefore,
Begin the war, the daily war—
A war with stupidity, wood to the core,
A war with frigidity, mean and poor,
A war with duplicity, all kinds in store,
A bloodless, but a death-dealing war!...

1968

* * *

But I am dozing still and dream
Of brilliant days, a summery sky
Where waves and rustles lyric wheat
And boldly ripens epic rye.

For in this city I'm out of place,
An ear beside the concrete strip
From which to worlds in star-decked space
The rockets, like slim swallows, slip.

1971

YEUDAKIA LOS



YEUDAKIA LOS was born in 1929 into a peasant family in the village of Starina, in the Vitebsk province. She studied at the Teachers' Training School and then at the philological faculty of the Minsk Teachers' Training College. She also finished the Higher Literary Courses at the Gorky Institute of Literature in Moscow. She worked for some time after in editorial offices.

Her first verses were published in 1948, and the first collection of her verses appeared in 1958. Since then she has published nine poetical collections. She also writes for children. Her verses are full of womanly warmth and goodness, and of deep love for nature and her motherland.

Mother
Our Forefathers
"Come, welcome guest..."
"In our small town..."

Mother

Not a teacher, nor a trained physician,
Not a weaving hand was she.

Mama was a real "domestician"—

That means she was able, you see,
To give one a taste for washing,
For wiping the windows quite clean,
For patching, for darning a stocking,
And for peeling potatoes fine.

She placed in my hand an appliance—

A duster, a besom, a broom,

For a quite unchildish science,

And ordered me: "Learn, don't moon!"

She scrimped and scraped with sly caution
From her income brought home with care,
And in parts she would strictly apportion
Two hundred and ten rubles bare.

No special conditions were given us—

Who would ever have thought it, though,

That her daughters would prove so vigorous,
And her son like a poplar grow.

But when earth shook with thunder of battle,

And the sergeant came for her son,

Mama, hiding tears, was able

To part with her treasured one.

And dare I show haughty demeanour,

Though the Institute course I've passed through?

Mama was an office-cleaner,

But most things

was able

to do!

Our Forefathers

To Pyatrus Brouka

My fatherland is ripening ears,
 And jasmine bloom, and forest shade,
 It is the singing saw one hears,
 Deep tracks which heavy wheels have made.
 Here nightly o'er the forest wall
 The rising moon shows amber-gold,
 And brotherly, without a brawl,
 The Byelorussia lived here of old.
 He felled the forest, tilled the field,
 And fished until the darkness came.
 Where grey mists in the distance melt,
 He drove his well-built raft amain.
 The fathers strictly children taught
 To care for bees, and plough their lands.
 In prayer one God alone was sought—
 The eternal toil of calloused hands.
 It was revealed to grandson's son
 That not for ill were they alive,
 And as for science, they knew but one,
 One gospel—work and you will thrive.
 Their skilful hands all things could do,
 Could hew their boats upon the shore,
 And stones for white-walled Sofia too,
 Above the Dvina, swift and pure.
 My forebears too could tar a boat,
 Could saw beams straight, and planks could plane,
 Rejoice in victory with their folk,
 And help their kin in grief and pain.

1957

* * *

Come, welcome guest,
 And I will give to you
 All things which friendly eyes may find endearing....

A grass-blade through the soil at night appearing,
And drops of dew, like little bells a-ringing,
The whole wide forest I will give you too!

The ox-eye daisies from the wayside pastures,
Do not refuse—accept them with a smile....
I'll give to you a sunbeam, but be cautious,
It will be hot as scorching winds awhile.

And here caressing grasses sway to meet you,
The pine-tops' ancient shades embrace you whole....
Don't be surprised—it is our right to greet you,
The law of our good land, and of my soul.

This right which you have found so captivating,
The enemy once encroached—a monstrous thing....
The grasses whisper—what's the wild grass saying?
The dew-drops ring, like silver scintillating....
What does that living gift—the forest, sing?

I think that you've no need of my translation,
You understand our songs without distress;
Let liberal nature serve her invitation,
Let fields of rye our guest, with smiles, address.

And let him scent the limes in fresh-blown starkness,
And spend the night beneath a leafy tent,
Where showers of stars whip sharply down the darkness,
And hear, through dreams, the last-dropped apple's dint.

And let him hear the grief of women singing
Of those who long have slept the eternal sleep.
And may he meet the youth, with grey hair gleaming,
The partisan, of whom the oaks still speak.

How many things I've promised you in passing,—
The grass, the ox-eye daisies and the rest,
And yet I fear, is there not something missing
For you my friend, our best and dearest guest?

I'll hide myself till sunset under cover,
 While on ahead your pathway lies in view,
 And write a cordial song for my dear brother,
 In which there will be all I promised you.

1959

* * *

In our small town
 the gardens are a-glut,
 And there is munching of the rosy fruit,
 And round the club by day —the hoarse-cheered team,
 At evening, though,
 so quiet you want to scream....

In our small town
 there's dew on grassy plots,
 And a prevalence of long, thick-plaited locks.
 Some are so dark, and some like ripened rye;
 They are so fine, you feel that you must fly,
 Even with combs and ribbons make you fair,
 Even place fresh-plucked garlands round your hair,
 Even look round on someone with a smile,
 And having conquered—
 queen it for a while.

The edge of dawn
 Above the town is seen....
 For children — school, for grandads — peace serene....
 But what for those with plaits as fair as flax,
 And even grey, since those days left their tracks,
 When winds of woe across our gardens blew,
 And off to take up arms the young lads flew.

Console these women, nightingales —their grief....
 They have no happiness, no family life....
 No liberation in the secret tear,

213 YEUDAKIA LOS

**No joy in plaits,
 in plaits of lovely hair....**

**And he, who by those locks was captive made,
Yet unsubdued, beneath the ground was laid.**

1962

MAKSIM LUZHANIN



MAKSIM LUZHANIN was born in 1909, in the village of Prusy, in the Minsk province. He finished the Minsk Teachers' Training School, and studied at the philological faculty of the Byelorussian State University. During the Great Patriotic War he served in the ranks of the Soviet Army, and took part in the battles near Moscow and Stalingrad. After the war, he worked in the editorial offices of magazines and newspapers and as a film editor in the Byelorussian Studios. He is deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR, and a member of the Board of the Republican Committee for the Defence of Peace.

He began publishing his work in 1925. Later his collections of verse *Steps*, *Unpaid Account*, *The Wide Field of War*, *Light of the Fatherland*, *Wide Expanses*, and many others appeared. He also writes prose, essays and screen plays.

He has been awarded the Yakub Kolas Literary Prize.

Immortality
A Moravian Song
Rat-a-Tat!
I Just Thought...
Oaks
The Artist
I've Met Them All...

Immortality

A frosty day. St. Petersburg. Folk strolling.
A last check on the pistols. All just so.
And to Black River swift the sledges rolling.
And there? What then? The poet does not know.

The fire flashed out—and by the bullet's violence
The singer fell. The glazed-eyed mist came down.
Half-risen, he fired—as if against the tyrant.
The hireling's wounded ... pity, not the crown!

Then nothingness.... The drifting snow unravels,
Beneath the whispering pines, the birches high,
It seems that far through Russia still he travels,
And Glory follows—wiping not her eye.

Mikhailovskoye. Whistling wintry tempests.
There powerful lines in that free soul matured.
He called to mind the fate of the Decembrists,
Regretting he was not with them immured.

His friends, in penal servitude, in prison,
While everywhere the convict-barracks swarm.
A captive likewise he, although at freedom,
Upon his tracks the Emperor's gendarme.

And now the moment comes of bitter parting....
He begs: "A little higher!" (Shades of death....)
"O life, farewell!"
And now his widow's weeping
No longer soothes his brow, his laboured breath.

"All under lock and seal!" the Tsar gives orders.
He wished the poet's voice to render dumb.
The coffin's gone,
But genius still strides forward
Its path, and wakes the centuries to come.

The poet's road grows wide, a mighty highway.
 Those days have passed, and now dawn brighter days,
 And meeting Pushkin at each door, each byway,
 The liberated man now pipes his praise.

1949

A Moravian Song

Kettle-drum, two fiddles, and the psaltery —
 No large orchestra, but nothing paltry.

Everybody wears a cap with different patterns.
 Echoing steel on heel-tips and on toe-tips rattles.

Belted lads, and girls with golden tresses,
 Kerchiefs waving over coloured dresses.

Rather strange that lads, moustaches sprouting early,
 Hide themselves behind those little aprons, surely?

Yes, the fiddlers know their proper places.
 Funny parts they play with serious faces.

Now the leader stamps his shoes of shining leather:
 "Lads, let's give the band a little dash of pepper!"

So the singers stopped, the players facing:
 Straight into their comrades' eyes stood gazing.

"Why, my frozen dulcimer, my hawks, my fiddles —
 Why turn blue, as if you'd supped no drink nor victuals?"

In reply drawled out the four musicians,
 Food and drink they'd had, more than sufficient.

"Say then, why so slow, your elbows scarce exerting?
 Squat you down upon the ground, and strike up sitting."

Down the quartet sits, and plays most sadly.
On the air the chorus rings back madly:

“Hey there, not like that dear friends, you play so sickly:
Strike up music on your knee-bones then, more quickly.”

On their knees at once knelt each musician:
Sadder still they played in that position.

“Hearing you, the tears hang heavy on our eyelids;
Play us something now, sweet little doves, in silence!”

Not a string nor bow touched by their fingers,
But it seems in mime the music lingers.

True it is, in silence feeling grows the greater.
Near ones learn to understand the dear ones better.

Now one leader pleads in protest bolder:
“Isn’t it time to start the Moravian polka?”

Make the echoes ring around, no moment missing.
Strike up music, players, at the gallop skipping.”

Dulcimer, fiddles set their paces humming,
Whirling round the copper drum goes drumming.

Now I hear “Levonikha” through the woods go ringing,
And I’m quite uplifted by Moravian singing.

1955

Rat-a-Tat!

Rat-a-tat! I rapped the out-house door.
“Good-day!” I said.
You stepped out — you gave no greeting more —
Stood in the shade.

But your eyes suspicion flash,
But your hand stays on the latch.

“Roads of chance have brought me here —”
I say.

“Brought me in bad time I fear,
today.”

Maiden lips are stern, composed.
Cabin door stays firmly closed.

Further conversation—dumb....
“Well, it’s fine that winter’s come,
But no snow that ever blew
Could blot out the heart in you.”

“Leave the porch. You needn’t wait.
Don’t forget to close the gate.”
“I shall go: the creaking of my sleigh
You’ll remember many a winter’s day!”

1956

I Just Thought...

I just thought I’d go over one evening, and state
That the girls had no right to be singing so late,
Nor the lads to hang round by their lights, I’d have said,
And with their accordions to wake up the dead.

I went out—but said nought, stopped no music, well no,
For I too stayed out late, sang out loud, long ago.
As they too are unable, myself I can’t bring
To speak about all that I feel, come the spring.

Though snows may have whitened my temples, in truth,
All the same I retain a few sparks of my youth.

1957

Oaks

How many young oak-trees have lifted their shootlets
With leaves in whole handfuls to catch at the light,
And grasping the soil with their ravenous rootlets
Are filling their sinews with sap to full height.

Dark green at the base of their trunks in profusion,
As if each were wearing a kid-leather glove,
The finest of rootlets your fingers won't loosen!—
The thickest among them you can't even move!

They grow toward sunshine, erect, elementary,
Beloved by the broad-shouldered giants of old,
By those in their second, or even third century,
For whom threatening thunder no terrors can hold.

1957

The Artist

The sun was setting. He had sketched
A picture.
It seemed that he had nearly reached
The juncture
To reproduce
With one out-sweeping hand,
The boats, the ropes,
The sea-gulls wings wide-spanned.

You almost could have sensed
What made
 the sea-gulls scream.
You almost could have glimpsed
The sea-bed's stars
 agleam.

He laboured on
While darkness fell
Upon the bay,

Till shades of blue he could not tell
Nor pick out well
From grey.

Indeed, he never left the place
Till dawn, extending,
Showed him his piece,
And sea and space
Unending.

He'd caught the subtle colours right,
His breakers gleamed.
His sea-birds white whirl round in flight
As if they screamed.

But not in this nor that it lived,
A work well-done:
It simply never would have breathed,
Had there not balanced on the blue,
Scarce seen, so frail,
But lively
 and impetuous too,
The fisher's sail.

1957

I've Met Them All...

I've met them all....
'Neath skies of lead,
Fate sent me on her iron wheels,
The milk-maids, nannies bringing bread,
And girls on high stiletto heels.

"But was there no-one ever came,
Who would have changed your life to gold,
Who, as she stepped down from the train,
Just made you go all hot and cold?"

I pace the station—here I am:
I have no reason to complain,
For no-one sent a telegram,
Nor wanted me to wait in vain.

I simply felt, somehow, somewhere,
An orient express would come:
She, all a-glow, would see me there,
Would call, and I, of course, would run....

1957

PYATRUS MAKAL



PYATRUS MAKAL was born in 1932, in the village of Krushinyani, now part of the Byelostok province of the Polish People's Republic. He studied in Grodno, at the Construction Engineering Vocational School. He finished the Teachers' Training College and the Higher Literary Courses in Moscow. He is head of the Literary Section of the Republic's Theatre for the Young Viewer.

His verses began to appear in print in 1949. In 1955 his first book of verse *First Tracks* came out. He is the author of a whole series of poetical collections. He works very fruitfully in the field of drama, and has written several plays for children.

He translates from the Polish and Slovakian languages.

"It seems the wounds have got better..."
"The rocket and the automobile..."
To Work, Then, Graver of Light
I'm From the Farm
Rat-Race

* * *

It seems the wounds have got better,
 The alarm in hearts has been healed.
 The veterans get together
 On Victory Day in the square.
 Their endurance cast iron resembles!
 They sow and they reap and repair,
 They nurse artificial members,
 At head-office from thinking go bald.
 Past memory seeks oblivion.
 Her field needs demining perhaps.
 But the flesh 'neath the shirt is lingering
 Like one of those war-time maps....
 You don't lose it though in tatters,
 Till death with you it remains,
 A geography of the battles,
 A biography of the pains.
 The shell-fragments there are denoted,
 From the Volga to Vistula the road.
 On the rainbow ribbons awarded
 Like a medal there hangs the globe.
 On the square, as brother with brother,
 Where the flame of memory dies not,
 They embrace and hug each other
 With arms
 which they haven't got.

1970

* * *

The rocket and the automobile
 Have shortened space for us henceforth.
 And we have lost the love meanwhile
 Of going afoot upon the earth.
 And we've almost forgotten now,
 When barefoot through the fields you pass,
 How tenderly tease and tickle you,
 Like little knives, the blades of grass.

And all our independent roots,
 And all by which we live and breathe,
 To our metallic substitutes
 We step by step now slowly leave.
 For us they see, and move about
 Upon smooth concrete ribbons thus.
 For us they seek, for us find out,
 And even start to think for us.
 Ah! timeless heaven, how shall we fare?
 Our souls will stale like bread one fears.
 Beyond horizons far we hear
 Our iron laughter, iron tears.
 In inescapable loss and doubt
 Time catches us, with shortened breath,
 And, like a new-transplanted heart,
 Beats ever restless in our breast.
 In some blue trance we then perceive
 An iron grief within us delves:
 And in the end—what shall we leave
 To our true selves,
 To our true selves?

1972

To Work, Then, Graver of Light

Each morning, like a child of four or five,
 I open up my eyes in sheer delight
 On this unique and ever-wondrous life—
 This world which every day is born from night.
 The light taps quietly on my window pane,
 And in their holes the shadows hide like mice,
 And all around, once darkness, now again
 Takes on its usual form, its usual place.
 And just as if from some magician's hand
 A fluttering bird into the heavens flies,
 The leaves burst forth, and on the lazy land
 The stream, a flashing, wavering ribbon lies.

With glassy gleam in all their hundred eyes
 The giant flats with towering storeys loom.
 From factory chimneys greybeard smoke-wisps rise,
 Like some strange genii from the bottle's gloom.
 Come light, into all corners of the earth,
 Still wrapped around in ancient mist and dark,
 Illuminate them with the naked truth,
 Return to them lost faces, life's bright spark.
 To work, then, graver of light, my brother gay,
 Beloved for ages in each human heart,
 And with your kind and gentle touch each day
 Fulfil again your high and noble art!

1972

I'm From the Farm

With charring twigs aglow shoot through my dream
 The fires of spring, where many an ember lingers.
 I'm from the farm, from fields where furrows gleam —
 The smell of earth new-ploughed hangs round my fingers.
 Upon my hands the callouses still burn,
 The marks of heavy toil and drunk exhaustion,
 For my successor quite out of the question....
 Like rye, from earth toward the light I turn.
 The cherry trees at eve with blossom seethed,
 As fragrant as the foam on fresh milk steaming,
 When in the furrows my two arms I bathed,
 Before I washed them in the freshet streaming.
 I am a ploughman, wakened by the spring.
 Behind the plough I endlessly went plunging,
 As if in harness with the horse would swing,
 And draw from dark my earthly cart to the sunshine.
 I learned to read the land's high secret ways,
 I waded in warm soil up to my armpits,
 And I continue, working for new harvests,
 The cereal serial story of my days.

The highest heavens upon my shoulders lie.
 Had you not given me bread, you hills and valleys,
 Could I have then attained that farthest sky,
 And burned my lips upon its starry chalice?

1972

Rat-Race

Nerves are tingling in the chase,
 To the edge of suicide driven.
 They fear
 to drop back in the race
 Of nonsensical mad ambition.
 To be first, to be first, they thirst,
 And they egg you on till you burst;
 Competition does not diminish,
 Though you know what waits at the finish.
 The rat-race—

 you put out in storm,
 Leave the shore and the sheltered harbour.
 The rat-race—

 all smashed and torn
 The cars burn out on the tarmac.
 In this feverish free-for-all
 My humanity feels degraded:
 Some fly high—before they fall,
 Some above the knees go naked....
 These racers have titan's teeth,
 They would swallow up open spaces,
 Flying headlong at breakneck speed
 Overtake—

 and plunge into abysses.
 You who whip the rat-race along,
 You troubadours of that battle,
 Enough of the horns and the gong—
 Let us all slow down a little....

1973

ARKADZ MARTYNOVICH



ARKADZ MARTYNOVICH was born in 1920, in the village of Barbarov, in the Mogilyov province. He finished the Minsk Teachers' Training School, and worked as a teacher. He took part in the Great Patriotic War. Upon its conclusion, he worked in the editorial offices of periodical publications in the Republic.

His first verses were printed in 1936. In more recent years he has been working mainly as a prose writer.

A Riddle

"Above the green grove, but not high..."



A Riddle

'Twas long ago in childhood fair,
A wanderer came to stay the night.
He sang a legend, like a prayer,
Which echoed to his zither bright.

A riddle in that tale went forth
With him in many a land to rest:
"What is the lightest thing on earth?
What is the sweetest thing on earth?
What is the firmest thing?
Now guess!"

Directly I replied, though small,
"A feather,
 honey,
 and a stone...."

Years later I recalled that tale
When peace and freedom both were gone,
When weeds had overgrown our vale,
And grief had come to every home.

A mother had one son. But war
Spared not a single thing on earth—
Not even her poor heart.
What's more,
She sent her son to face his death.

He died a hero. His young life
He gave to save his fatherland.
And in his home, now full of grief,
Was fated nevermore to stand.

The mother.... Let us not repeat
How still the wounds like fire smart—
But let us solve the riddle set,
Which glorifies a woman's part.

The lightest is the mother's child.
The sweetest is the mother's milk,
The firmest is the mother's heart.

1957

* * *

Above the green grove, but not high,
And like cotton-wool, soft and white,
A cloud sails across the sky,
Which is festively calm and bright,
From the quietest hour of dawn,
With pure azure, as fine as lawn.

No wealth of fine words need I,
My thought, like the cloud, rides alone.
Where I see my dear native sky,—
That cloud too is dear, and my own.

1957



NINA MATSYASH



NINA MATSYASH was born in 1943, in the village of Nivy, in the Brest region. She finished the Minsk Institute of Foreign Languages.

She has published two books of verse—*Fire* and *Gratitude*. Her verses are fresh and fragile, but full of promise and hope.

She translates from the German, French and Polish.

“I thought that it was spring alone I loved...”
“How long it is the storks have not appeared...”
There Lived Once on ■ Time a River

* * *

I thought that it was spring alone I loved:
In spring I soon mix up my true location.
In spring there sings within such aspiration—
I thought that it was spring alone I loved.

I thought that autumn I could not abide:
The autumn is so comfortless and dreary
With that which has not happened, lone and weary—
I thought that autumn I could not abide.

Yes, parting struck upon the big blue bell:
How long already my imagination
Leads back to native parts, as if salvation—
Yes, parting struck upon the big blue bell....

Yet summer, winter, all I now accept—
The springtime floods, the leaves in autumn falling.
If earth, like sunshine is my spirit warming—
Yet summer, winter, all I now can bless!

1970

* * *

How long it is the storks have not appeared....
The ice long since upon the streams has cleared.
And long since their white wings, like slender arms,
The gulls are stretching over reeds and marsh.
The starlings with resounding whistles shake
The pollen from hazel catkins in the brake.
Through sunny spots the grass its way has wormed.
...How long it is my head has not been turned....
How happy are the friendly springtime eyes—
But why does not my heart rejoice likewise?
The spring has not yet reached it, not yet come.

On shores still black and white lies winter numb.
 Day's darkness, and the pallor of long night....
 And still the sun each day shines yet more bright!
 And yet more keenly ears are strained that way—
 "Perhaps the storks will fly back home today?..."
 As if with their appearance woke anew
 One's soul.

...As if I were not waiting you....

1971

There Lived Once on a Time a River

"Do not dissuade me," said the river
 To all her clever cautious sisters.
 "I have to know what's past that forest.
 I'll take a look,—return tomorrow."

Beyond the wood lay steppeland arid,
 By feather-grass and winds beloved.
 The river taught that land once barren
 To grow fine orchards, fruit to ripen.

"We beg you stay a little longer.
 You will be crowned with fame and honour!"
 "Forgive me, but I must discover
 What's hid behind that mountain yonder...."
 Thus quietly replied the river.

Her course was long, and often anguished.
 At last

her sensitive ear distinguished
 Some kind of tremor inexpressible,
 Some kind of clamour inexplicable.

Her heart beat loud, uneven suddenly,
 In glad presentiment of discovery!

But what a woe!...

 The river slid
Over a grey indifferent cliff
Breast foremost down the deep abyss!
And falling, yet the river taught
The silent gorge to express his thought.

She heard from him of distant seas,
And clearly flashed—

 “I have to reach....”

There lived once on a time a river....
O river, live for ever!

1971

PIMEN PANCHANKA



PIMEN PANCHANKA was born in 1917 in Tallinn, Estonia, where his parents, poor Byelorussian peasants, had come in search of a living. After the Great October Revolution the family returned to their home-country. Panchanka finished a pedagogical course, and began to work as a teacher. During the Great Patriotic War he fought on various fronts, and was a war correspondent and journalist. After the war he edited the journal *Youth*. He is ■ deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the BSSR.

His first verses were printed in 1933. He later published many books of verse including *The Roads of War*, *Iran Diary*, *Distant Stations*, *Oath of Allegiance*, *The Wide World*, *A Book of Travels and Love*. A book containing the collected works of the poet has been issued.

He has been awarded the Yanka Kupala Literary Prize, and the Byelorussian State Prize.

"Grey clouds swept o'er the forest speedily..."
The Flame Everlasting
Loneliness
Heart and Cross

* * *

Grey clouds swept o'er the forest speedily,
The birds grew silent in alarm.
But you were laughing unbelievably
At signs of the approaching storm.

Deep, deep into the dark interior
By forest paths my steps you led,
With eyes averted, large, mysterious,
You laughed and called me still ahead.

From every tree was thunder muttering,
From every moaning, groaning pine.
You lost your head, and whispered suddenly:
"What shall we do, good friend of mine?"

But fir-trees solemnly and cunningly,
Beneath their curtain called us there.
I saw your eyes, their moist profundity,
For the first time, so near, so near.

A screen of rain fell white and glistening,
Nought left but thunder and the dark.
And you, always so shy, now whispering,
Pressed close to me in sudden shock.

The tall trees creaked and squeaked repeatedly,
The ground was shaken where we stood,
My heart-beat hammered sweet, elatedly,
And lightning blinded all the wood.

I may forget my friends, my poetry,
But like a dream, like life retain
The earthly sweet of lips inflammatory,
The scent of grass, the swish of rain.

The Flame Everlasting

By shaggy-haired stormclouds our Minsk has
been smothered,
The shadows of autumn our Svisloch have covered
With leaves freshly-fallen.

On the river's grey surface gold patches go spinning,
The branches show through where the gilding is thinning.
The roadways are slushy.

Here low, rolling slowly, the mist-vapour thickens,
But there on the square by the obelisk flickers
The flame everlasting.

As if by a camp-fire were partisans lying,
About open wounds mutual bandages tying,
Their cartridges counting.

**In just such an autumn in war they have striven,
Have broken blockades, and their lives they have given
In righteous endeavour.**

**These heroes for ever are frozen in granite
And bronze.... Autumn storm hurl no thunder upon it,
This flame everlasting.**

**In this sacred flame fly the sparks of high valour,
And still unextinguished the avenger's red banner,
By steel-splinters riddled.**

In this sacred flame is the dawn into blood slowly turning,
The eyes of the partisan-widow in anguish still burning
O'er communal graveyards.

In this sacred flame is the blare of yesterday's siren....
The rain, by this flame its skinny old shin-bones is drying,
While shadows go flying.

In mist-shrouded autumn gleam flower-bright tresses
Of wreathes, which are full of soft human caresses
And deepest of sorrows.

No need to recall grievous trouble and mischief.
May radiant peace of the golden-haired wheatsheaf
Illumine the future.

By the brightness of happiness may we see better.
May this flame, like a flag, on the square ever flutter,
Its sparks star the heavens.

That heart upon which such a spark once should settle
Will burn like a camp-fire, will beat for the battle,
Will never grow colder.

1961

Loneliness

What is all this anti-matter?
It's the voice of dead nightingales
Reproduced by a tape-recorder.
The ocean bursts with a roar
In this room
Where my books are hoarded.
From the jungle
Striped tigers have sprung
And rushed off into the buffet.
Again the forgotten actor,
Resurrected with roguish glamour,
Tries hard to raise a titter
With the old-fashioned heavy humour.
Then the lecturer on human relations
On life's moral aspect natters;
Himself lives in leisurely fashion,
Eagerly counting his stipend....
Possessors of televisions
Switch off those phantom receivers!
Enough of sitting and smoking
In loneliness lost to this planet....
Read a hundred books about loving—
Without it you'll never be happy.

You may see all the films about passion,
 When you love, you will find it yet stronger.
 The town is liberally lighted—
 A million lamps blind your eyes.
 Only one of the windows is darkened—
 And yours is not very bright.
 So plunge in the flood of the people
 Who throng streets and squares still alight.
 Perhaps that unlighted window
 Will light up for you tonight.

1964

Heart and Cross

A doctor lived in our region,
 There are no such doctors now,
 He gave you a leech or a cupping,
 Next day you were well somehow.
 A midwife, a judge and adviser,
 A rural old osteopath,
 He knew our most intimate secrets,
 The secrets of herbs, and death.
 He was never eager for silver,
 And lived not rich, but wise.
 Another would grab ten rubles
 Five kopeks, with blushes, his price.
 With old-wives' tales and dirt he struggled
 Little difference, grumble or not,
 With the droughts and fires, and the ploughshares
 Getting broken upon a root....
 With the drunkards the old man was angry,
 Unresigned to human tears,
 And there he grew wrinkled and faded,
 Tired to death with constant cares.
 And soon on his door death was knocking,
 But our doctor was not yet done,
 First of all his final wishes
 To the eldest peasants made known:

"You must bury me near the village,
 By the silver-birch on the hill,
 And put up a cross, but make it
 Of iron, and tall—very tall."
 He died without suffering, and people
 Bowed silent heads on the hill.
 The whole district came to the funeral,
 The old women cried farewell.
 "Rest in peace, our faithful defender,
 We weep an honest man's loss...."
 And the villagers o'er the grave there
 Erected a tall iron cross.
 And a marvel! Since that springtime
 The fires came quite to an end,
 Though the thunder roared, and the lightning
 From the heights the sky would rend.
 A legend went round of the marvel,
 But few were the folk who knew,
 That the cross all threat of misfortune
 From the haystacks and thatching drew:
 That the heart in that silent body
 As in life, still loving the folk,
 The fire on itself directed,
 And captured the lightning-stroke.



WLADZIMIR PAULAU



WLADZIMIR PAULAU was born in 1935, in the village of Zamoshye, in the Minsk region. He graduated from the journalistic faculty of the Byelorussian State University, and worked in the periodical press. At the present time he is an editor of the Byelorussian *Khudozhestvennaya Literatura* Publishing House.

He came out with his first verses in the youth papers in 1954. Two books of his verse have been published—*Horizon* and *Light and Shade*. He also writes prose and children's books.

Work

"If there rose from each company one man..."
Light and Shade

Work

When you are at home I have no peace—
I can't find a quiet nook;
And time and again you come to me:
“Daddy, read me a book!”

A timid question, a hesitant step,
For often you've heard my quirk:
“Another time, then, my little chap.
You see I'm trying to work!”

And off you go, and you do not know
When that holiday will be,
When the room won't be dumb and silent so,
And your daddy will be free.

Before in the half-open door you appear,
Your complaint flies on ahead:
“But daddy, you're only thinking there,
And yet you were working, you said!”

It's as if I had lied to you, in disgrace,
In the most important thing,
For shame at your daddy flies over your face,
Like the shadow of a wing.

...And before all the bridges are quite burnt through,
Your daddy must see, in haste,
That thinking, the others, and not only you,
Should give, as real work, its right place.

People slowly learn about life, my son,
Through the years, as suns rise and sink.
But I beg you that now, and later on,
You won't be ashamed—to think!

* * *

If there rose from each company one man,
From the perished armies, my mates,
Then would creak throughout my land
Some thousands of thousands of gates.

If there rose from each company one man,
From those graves where the wormwood pales,
Then would sweep throughout my land
Some thousands of thousands of tales.

If there rose from each company one man,
From the depths where the slow tide runs,
Then would be born in my land
Some thousands of thousands of sons.

But none rises up and comes back,
And the grave and the deep make no sound....
And so many dear friends I lack,
Which no-one is able to count.

1966

Light and Shade

The earth's held fast by roots out-splayed
Of the lofty oak, and the moss discreet.
The flood of light and stubborn shade
Lays prison gratings at our feet.

And when suspended sunbeams play
Above the space of high-browed stumps,
The shadows hide in the forest away,
Beneath the crowns and rough-barked butts.

It takes us in like refugees,
Into its light and spring-decked glade,

**Or makes our very bones to freeze
In autumn, with that self-same shade.**

**Our wealth is found in no grey dream,
In pallor or tan it has no place,
But in the light and shade it's seen,
Which lay their rays upon our face.**

1967

ALYAKSEI PYSIN



ALYAKSEI PYSIN was born in 1920, in the village of Visoky Borok, in the Mogilyov province. He studied in the Minsk Communist Institute of Journalists, and took up newspaper work. He fought in the Great Patriotic War on the Kalinin, Leningrad and Baltic fronts. After the war he worked in the newspapers. He finished the Higher Literary Courses in Moscow.

His first book of verse was issued in 1951, followed by a series of collections of verse and longer poems: *Blue Morning*, *My Meridians*, *Your Hands*, *Watermeadows*, *Towards the People*, etc. The poet captures the spirit of the times, and is able to share it with the people to whom he is devoted.

He had been awarded the Yanka Kupala Literary Prize.

"A thread without a tangle..."
"Through my window fifteen stars are sporting..."
"Towards day's end the light still lingers..."
"In the oak grove the nightingale's silent..."
"Much in this life soon passes by..."
"Whitening, apple-trees, whitening..."
"Suppose you make, just for your soul's own sake..."

* * *

A thread without a tangle
Is the road that leads back home.
There was a rock in our hamlet—
A legless god of stone.

All-seeing, and rusty-coloured,
He weighed some hundred ton.
Say, whither has he wallowed?
No sign nor trace where he's gone!

Perhaps it's not worth bewailing
All that vanished from our land?
Our losses were so overwhelming—
That stone's just a grain of sand.

1963

* * *

Through my window fifteen stars are sporting,
Full of spring, and young.
They're not women who will soon be forty—
Maidens every one.

There will pass full many a generation—
Those same stars will in the window flower.
And what possible kind of consolation
Can I conjure up, this midnight hour?

All that's dear and happy I remember.
From past days sad memories I reject.
Day by day, from each a ray, an ember,
And from each the sunbeams I collect.

In the quiet four-square window casement,
 Here I lift my sleepless lamp on high,
 And I ask the stars, to their amazement,—
 Guess what's risen,—the sun, or one man's life?

You can't know about these thoughts, my neighbours,
 Nor about the simple truth, as such,
 That I love the water, oaks and daisies,
 And warm fur beneath my gentle touch.

That with all my love and trust I treasure
 My bright-browed and shining earthly star,
 Quite unnoticed in her simple measure,
 Sharing every care, and roads afar.

So, farewell, dear stars, till our next meeting—
 At the window now my swallows flit.
 And the white high dawn comes slowly sweeping,
 And with sober clarity day is lit.

1964

* * *

Towards day's end the light still lingers,
 A moist shade decks the oak-tree grove....
 O how I need your soothing fingers,
 My dearest love!

When I am tired beyond all measure,
 I take support from your dear hand.
 That flow of precious power I treasure—
 As one we stand.

If you should see my anger smoulder,
 Offensive words upon my tongue,—
 Just lay your hand upon my shoulder,
 And I'll be dumb.

The oaks in dales their leaves are shedding,
Each lives its earthly spell, then flies—
In my quiet autumn, come, caressing
My weary eyes.

And I shall feel and see, unseeing,
Through your hands shall see the skies above,
The forest rowans, the swallows flying,
My dearest love.

1964

* * *

In the oak grove the nightingale's silent,
The lark o'er the plough trills no more.
I gaze at cold distant horizons—
Forty swallows have flown from my store.

Forty swallows all blue and white feathered,
Showed me heights for which I ever thirst.
I don't know really how it was, whether
Sun or gunpowder scorched me first.

But not now, nor shall I in future
Regret that I came under fire.
I must quit rising roads at this juncture—
Wave a friendly hand as I retire....

1965

* * *

Much in this life soon passes by,
From memory's path is swept away.
I want to go into the rye.
The rye seems like eternal day.

I take a rough and bearded ear
 Upon its sensitive wire of straw —
 And my forefather then I hear,
 That far-off sower I never saw.

The words of unknown reapers then
 Come floating over meadow ways,
 With waving ears of golden grain
 In noonday's vaporous haze.

Beneath that haze is ripening here
 An alloyed hope, a mixed desire.
 My stalk of rye hums soft but clear,
 Twixt then and now the connecting wire.

And near the far horizon strains
 Through membranous rye-stalk's trembling buzz.
 My hands are seeking for such grains
 That future reapers so hear us.

1965

* * *

Whitening, apple-trees, whitening,
 I see your blossoms are lightening.

In my first cares—fellow-wanderers,
 And of my future the hostages.

I was cut down in adversity—
 Apples were scarred, and in scarcity.

All to which I was subjected,
 Clearly life's orchard reflected.

Here in that orchard I'm sleepless—
 Evil or good memories keeping?

Mist blows o'er distant horizons.
Twilight descends in silence.

There where the hills stand heightened,
Apples and stars have ripened.

Apples from boughs come slipping
Into the hands of the living.

1969

* * *

Suppose you make, just for your soul's own sake,
A hive, a trough, a starling-cote in a tree.
A bee or a bird in some ways you are like—
You might first see the light as bird or bee.

You might be born a birch, which you chop down;
An ant which sucks from stumps what sap he can;
So in that being, whose form you do not own,
Then feel yourself, at least at times, my man.

1973

PILIP PYASTRAK



PILIP PYASTRAK was born in 1903, in the village of Sakovtsi, in the Grodny province. He took up several professions. He was an active participant in the underground movement in Western Byelorussia, and was imprisoned for 11 years by the Polish landlords. In 1939 he was liberated by the Soviet Army, and in 1940 was elected deputy to the Supreme Soviet of the USSR (first convocation). During the Great Patriotic War he took part in the partisan movement.

His first verses were written in prison, in 1927. He has published two collections of verse. He now works mainly in the field of prose, and is the author of many stories and novels.

He is an Honoured Worker of Byelorussian Culture, and laureate of the Yakub Kolas Literary Prize.

Mausoleum
Père-Lachaise Cemetery
About Khatyn

Mausoleum

Tread prudently here, as befits.
Bow your head in the tranquil twilight.
Read the thoughts of those lowered lids,
Look well and long, and be silent.

You will hear through the era's breeze
Generations go noisily stepping.
From the stars crowns of glory they weave....
He is sleeping. Immortal sleeps Lenin.

Lenin sleeps. He lives ever with us!
In his tracks the horizons grow spacious.
Man's oppression is stamped in the dust,
And we all become more courageous.

Tread prudently here, as befits.
Let the moments in silence find ending,
In the light of these lowered lids,
On Mausoleum wall a-trembling.

1939

Père-Lachaise Cemetery

(From the cycle "Travels in France")

Above the wall is hanging
the chestnuts' quiet blaze....
Like arms their boughs on high arise,
where dumb in tortured anguish
she gazes out—the crucified—
the Commune....

This is Père-Lachaise.

It seems to me my many years have gone
back there, long, long ago,

upon the path they trod, and carried on
 the one great thing we know
 which in their hearts was seething,
 whose power grew into being
 'neath Lenin's light aglow.

The years and whirlwinds over continents go storming
 with rousing uproar of the people's barricades.
 They build a monument to those, who in close order
 were first to meet the bullets, the cannonades.

They fell beneath the hail of lead in masses,
 those heralds of great spring's awakening gleams,
 for bright clear skies, for sunlight's warm caresses,
 for all humanity's cherished golden dreams.

And I have come with love to bow before them,
 to press those days of struggle to my heart,
 and to remember conflagrations o'er them,
 when Paris Communards began their march.

1961

About Khatyn

Woods are rustling thoughtfully and lonely,
 Of some mystery quietly seem to sing.
 Look around with human glances only,
 Something dear your heart begins to wring.

Suddenly you hear that distant thunder,
 Thundering guns, the roaring overhead.
 Fascist hands have fired the huts, like tinder,
 Soaring flames blaze up in darkness red.

In those huts the parents held a party,
 Many cheerful children they embraced.
 Kiddies chattered: "Mummy, Daddy, Aunty,
 We are going with the school today,

In the forest where are many birdies,
 Where all sorts of lovely mushrooms grow!"
 Off they went to taste the joy that's wordless
 In the forest deep, where beams break through.

All remembered how the rye had ripened,
 How kolkhoz farm paths bloomed in the sun,
 How the fields' horizons had been widened,
 Working one for all, and all for one.

So had been those fields set round by forests,
 So had been Khatyn.... Now orphaned bells
 Send sad warnings to you in the copses—
 Their alarm with people always dwells.

Folk still come, as if in choired procession,
 Each with pilgrim soil clutched in his fist.
 They bring their gift, their motherland's devotion,
 And all is added to the graveyard dust.

They come—the poets and tribunes of the people.
 They pass along a blood-soaked road now done.
 They carry with them memories of the battle,
 And scarlet banners of victory⁴hard-won.

They, happy in their proud high aspiration,
 Have made their epic feat a lasting song—
 March, bold ones, in the radiance of the nation,
 And may your light strike fear in the enemy throng.

ALYES RAZANAU



ALYES RAZANAU was born in 1948, in the village of Selets, in the Brest region. He studied at the Byelorussian State University, and finished the Brest Teachers' Training College.

His first verses were published when he was sixteen. Two books of his collected verses have appeared since then.

Together with Nil Gilyevich he translated an anthology of classic Bulgarian poetry into Byelorussian.

Speech
Unuttered Ballad
The Ballad of the Omen
The Drummer

Speech

A delicate peal....
 The thunder loud....
 A thin sharp scream....
 A mighty noise....
 All isolated kinds of sound
 Flowed on to form a primitive voice.
 The far horizons shook and shrank,
 It beat enormous on the skies.
 Not into silence then it sank.
 It sank only again to rise.
 And still and storm,
 And rustle and hum—
 Into one thread was woven each—
 When from man's bosom,
dark and dumb,
 One wondrous day there issued speech.

1965

Unuttered Ballad

Bird-cherry's pungent fragrance drips
 From blossom on green trees....
 The petals on your parted lips—
 My kisses these.

I hurried, but was not in time.
 The ripe dawn came.
 The songs of breezes in the pine
 Repeat my name.

I come in sleep,
 Like rain I sweep,
 Like shadows press.
 The rustling elm above you speaks
 My sleeplessness.

Where'er in life your path may lead,
 I shall be there.
 I'm nowhere. Do not look for me.
 I'm everywhere.

Maria, listen,
 Maria, stay!...
 Night steals above....
 But off you fly.... And in your wake
 My passionate love!...

1969

The Ballad of the Omen

Maiden, for whom are you waiting?
 But she is expecting—no-one,
 in the whole world waiting no-one.
 With crowing red-combed cockerels
 the hand-towels she embroiders,
 and does not glance at the highway.
 But onto the floor, of a sudden,
 falls the wool with which she is working....
 The omen can't be mistaken,
 the token can't be broken—
 who is coming along the highway,
 who is coming along the highway,
 who visits this corner of silence?
 ...But already someone enters—
 his step is heard on the threshold.

Like the autumn leaves he's trembling.
 He enters—a handsome figure,
 his lips are blackened and bleeding,
 his eyes in a dim haze flicker.
 He sees her—
 as if from oblivion,

the exhausted words he utters:

“You see.... I’ve escaped the pursuers....”
and falls....

But none will overtake him....

The envoy of winds and the future,
he is raving of bloody battles....

Young maid, has it not happened,
what you had thought would happen?

So faintly you are breathing,

young maiden, what’s the matter?

What then?... Dear God above us!

The lad is her true lover....

And all so hard to credit,

and all so unexpected!

Herself not understanding
the maid takes up her sewing....

But in the red embroidering
the flame-red blood is flowing.

She brings a jug of water,
her hands

fall trembling

with it!...

What’s wrong, what is the matter?

Can one sign of misfortune

foretell a second visit—

another comes—who is it?

Her heart with pain is clouded,
already loss it senses.

...The hut feels overcrowded,

so cramped and overcrowded—

for Death has quietly entered....

The Drummer

**On the blood-spattered grass lie the tattered banners,
and the blood-coloured sun is absorbed in the haze....
But with furious world-shattering blows there hammers
the drummer-boy: roll after roll he plays.**

**Arise to the fighting,
arise to the falling,
mad flight and oblivion, and whirlwind's breath.
To unknown skies, and to unknown fortune,
to unknown bounds —
 summons the drummer death.**

**From route-march to route-march,
from action to action,
through smoke of exhaustion, through yearning sore.
He knows no peace, and no other distraction,
he rests only once—then moves no more.**

**We penetrate time, push aside the cover
of mysteries and secrets—
 With you evermore
still thunders and thunders the sleepless drummer,
and promises life, but the premise is war.**

1970

MIKHAS RUDKOUSKI



MIKHAS RUDKOUSKI was born in 1936, in the village of Ostrov, in the Brest region. After finishing the Pinsk Teachers' Training School, he took up work as a teacher.

He began publishing his verses in 1958. Since then he has come out with two collections of verse—*First Versts* and *Blue Fords*.

At present he is working as a journalist.

Polesye Legend

My Grandad Was a Village Smith



Polesye Legend

There, where to the dense and golden cornfield,
Talkative, the forest bends its head,
He was found in flowers and grass of August,
And was given a forest name—Alyes.

He was lifted up toward the heavens—
Let the world take note of you, young star!
He was bathed in tepid dew of meadows,
And the youngster grew, like mushrooms there.

Fair of face, and hair all golden-rusty,
He was never weak of heart nor hand,
As befits a lad of Byelorussia,
Specially from Polesye's forest land.

Cuckoos weave him cobweb shirts in the branches,
From the mist's most delicate silky veils,
And the cows from lush and dewy marshes
Bring home creamy milk to fill the pails.

Squirrels gather cob-nuts from the hazel,
Hive-bees bring their honey, the best at that—
And for him, as in the ancient fable,
To Lake Naroch goes the grey tom-cat.

For the lad the crow a flute is tuning—
Gossip magpie has put round a tale
That a certain girl so nicely looking
Likes the boy so much it makes her pale.

Magpie, don't spread through the wood such hearsay,
And don't tangle up the moonbeams long.
Fine above Alyes the whole Polesye
Now is humming, like a cradle song.

My Grandad Was a Village Smith

My grandad was a village smith,
 A king of smiths, a living myth.
 If forgeable—he'd forge it deft,
 Not in the hut—in the smithy he slept.
 When on the spree—then on the spree—
 A day or two, or even three.
 Though old, such strength was in his hands.
 His sledge swings high—his soul expands.

My grandad peacefully passed out—
 Well, not passed out, but smouldered out—
 Not smouldered out, but burnt right out,
 Like furnace coals.

He asked me then
 "Bring me some water, grandson mine,
 Such burning in my chest I feel...."
 I brought some. And he drank.

"We still
 Shall live, my grandson young,
 And forge the shares...."

Well, off you run
 Enjoy yourself—I'll take a nap...."
 I sprang to Spring with hasty step.
 He fell asleep—his last long sleep....

His axes thundered in the wood,
 His scythes went swishing in the mead—
 Those grandad forged and tempered hot.
 His horseshoes struck their sparks of fire.
 Countless kilometres clopped the mare
 Which had by grandfather been shod.
 That evening from the flying cloud
 Above the forge roared thunder loud,
 And brighter than the sun's bright rays
 The strokes of lightning smote the grass....

.

And in the village to this day
“The Smiths” they call us, as we pass.
My grandad was a general smith,
A king of smiths—a living myth.

1961

ALYAKSEI RUSETSKI



ALYAKSEI RUSETSKI was born in 1912, in the village of Studenets, in the Mogilyov province. He graduated from the Moscow Veterinary Institute. He worked in scientific research institutes in Moscow, Minusinsk, and Minsk. He fought in the Great Patriotic War. He was ■ literary consultant to the Byelorussian Writers' Union, and later vice-editor in chief of the *The Flame* literary journal.

His first verses came out in 1935. He has published several collections of verse, including *The Light in Your Windows*, *Sunrise and Sunset* and *In the Service of the Light*.

Powder Barrel
Revelation
April
Skylark
Zone of Silence



Powder Barrel

**Spirit of blackest blast,
powder—merciless omen,
Whose famous friend and guest?
Whose thrice-accursed foeman?**

**You yourself can't recall
who found you useful, injurious;
held by the people in thrall,
spirit so powerful and furious.**

**When the long swords were notched
on mail and visor in battle,
you exploded and scorched
all with fire and metal.**

**Since those times on the roads
where you gallop, provoking,
croak all the carrion crows,
lonely ruins lie smoking.**

**You have raged the world round,
this land, that, or the other,
but black-barked birches are found
mostly in Byelorussia.**

**You grew strong, and your blast
known here by each poor devil,
spirit in bombs bound fast,
spirit expended in metal.**

**Sparks from you could soon
set off today in motion
a fire-breathing typhoon,
diresome atomic ocean.**

**Only from you, from you,
comes our alarmed emotion;**

now grows a new power too—
the mighty human ocean.

People from everywhere,
rise in your demonstrations,
so that fierce spirits don't flare
again between the nations.

Spirit of age-old grief,
spirit tamed by the people,
it is my firm belief—
into the grave you'll topple.

1960

Revelation

Not long ago,
having taken blood from my thumb
and sap from a maple's palm,
a biochemist
revealed the common bloodstock from which we come:
we are ancient blood-relations
upon this premise.
We are highly pleased
that this revelation shows
a common relationship in colour,
maybe;
how often colour-blind eyes have hinted vainly,
and life itself has hinted at those hues.
And when the red sun rises, pores for breathing
beneath the leaves are opened once again,
and dew is oxygenated then and steaming,
another day begins of happy exchange—
and then the branches of my lungs, florescent,
are all in blood-red blossoms effervescent.
In both one spirit of combustion plays,
observed in green and blood-red colour glowing;

for when the cold October wind starts blowing,
 then with red fire my green-leaved friend's ablaze.
 Like banners, trees in fiery red habiliments
 are whispering that in blood we are alike....
 We all are red,
 and like the natural elements,
 we are unconquerable,
 for we are life.

1964

April

Ah, April, what you can do to a chap!
 You red-head witch quite tipsy on sap....
 All kinds of nonsense creeps into my head:
 I walk in the woods—I'm a lad, instead.
 My boots are wet through, my nostrils flare,
 I sense the past snows and decaying earth,
 the golden bloom on the nut-trees there,
 and hear the ant-hill breathing beneath.
 Again I feel: the world is so warm,
 it's ready to promise me, for my joy,
 the bright-winged butterflies beautiful swarm,
 and a riot of colourful flowers to deploy.
 Like a nightingale's notes sounds the trill of the thrush,
 and the branches are full of heart-shaped buds
 just opening out, while down in the glade
 the aureole of green casts its early shade.
 The sun's overcast in blue skies for a time,
 with sharp shining knives the storm showers come,
 and stab them into my burning spine.
 The spring is here, the bumble-bees hum.
 But you don't appear with a bunch of flowers
 from out of that youthful wood of ours.

1965

Skylark

Beyond the sheaves, beyond the rye-field's blaze,
 beyond the dark forest, but seeming near,
 the sun goes down in a rosy haze,
 like a crimson disc, a huge disc here.
 The sun goes down in a crimson haze,
 but on high the light-winged skylark sports,
 still trembling, sings and can't finish his lays—
 for him the summer day's too short.
 My life, too, is short....

1965

Zone of Silence

The grasses shine with the dew in forest reaches,
 between the trees flit lovely butterflies;
 its evident here that silence and the birches
 remain not on the earth as utter lies.
 The woodland rings with wonderful acoustics,
 from far away you catch the wild wasps' hum:
 shall we not hear transistors from the bushes
 bark out the stadium's roar, while we stand dumb?
 Will not those modern and mechanical horsemen
 go charging past us straight into the glade—
 the motor-cyclists and the scooter-sportsmen,
 leaving behind the stink and noise they've made?
 Here I forget the thunder of the highway,
 I choose myself this favourite path of mine,
 into this grove where nature's mourning quietly,
 I make my pilgrimage, as to a shrine.
 Here I can roam around, or stand and wonder,
 beneath the tents of aspen and of birch,
 where down to me from heaven, as I ponder,
 comes solemn melancholy on the earth.

**I am inspired, my soul is radiated
like crowns of maple-trees by sunny light,
and budding thoughts, like leaves are liberated,
and whisper me of all things fine and bright.**

1966

RYGOR SEMASHKEVICH



RYGOR SEMASHKEVICH was born in 1945, in the village of Domashi, in the Minsk region. He graduated from the philological faculty of the Byelorussian State University. He worked as a teacher at a secondary school. At present he is lecturing at the University. He is a Candidate of philological science.

He has published two books of verse — *Forester's Hut*, and *Saturday*.

Dreams in Technicolour

"Ah, the wings of your white arms!..."



Dreams in Technicolour

Do you see your dreams in Technicolour?
 The straw-coloured hair of your love....
 The purpling clouds of the thunder,
 The jay-blue feathery dawn,
 And the green of the healing grasses,
 Or, like the old-fashioned films,
 Are your tones all white and greyish?
 We'll forgive the films.
 They're made to fit a scenario,
 And most scenarios suffer from too much grey.
 Their grey form goes with their grey ideas.
 They are saved by the music, and by advertisement,
 And by modern actors' strong constitutions most.
 But life is not a scenario someone has written,
 And therefore we must, with every single glance,
 With every breath intaken,
 Yes, even at night, when our eyes are closed fast,
 See life as it is—like this for example:
 Our little lad Lyonka with cherry-red lips
 From the pale-blue jug with bright patterns
 Is drinking his milk.
 Then a hand with the glint of early straw, pale golden,
 Replaces the jug on the table, and on those red lips
 A white streak of milk rests one moment....

It seems to me that the world is made of colours.
 Even history has its different shades:
 "Black night of reaction",

"Red dawn of the Revolution".

Let's forgive grey films.

They are made to fit the scenario.

The majority make some kind of moral point,
 Or are polished silk-smooth and softly rounded.
 But life is not a scenario, after all.
 Each scenario taken from life, which someone has written,
 Is pale. The colour has perished, and life disappears.

Khatyn, Oradour, and Auschwitz are in grey ashes.

But through them blazes the blood

and bright blue eyes

And, with them,

the Red Flag flaunting over the Reichstag.

No actors on screens.

but we ourselves choke in the labyrinth

Of plotted schemes of life designed not by us.

And sometimes we pay with our lives for their destruction.

In colours the world stands free.

I love the bright-coloured earth.

The house with the sky-blue shutters

And peonies under the window.

Here's Lyonka with Barsik, his ginger puppy.

You will never become grey ash?

You will never see your wide world one greyness?

That's fine—then I'll see you and dream of you so—

My blue-eyed Lyonka playing,

My house with the shutters of blue....

1966

* * *

Ah, the wings of your white arms!

They have vanished like some wonder....

Quiet beating of my heart

Now resounds like echoing thunder.

Bankside forest bright again

Will for us not lengthen dawning.

Hunters pose as idiots yawning,

In the glade of nightingales.

Quietly the arched bridge steals

Over gloomy stream and marshes,

And behind themselves the barges

Draw their long white trailing tails.

Let them float—before their eyes
A hundred Parises and Warsaws.
Blue, black, yellow, rusty—all sorts—
For long trips I've no desires.
Quiet, my soul, for valley-wise
With the bare-foot mist I travel....

The most amazing devil's an angel,
Once expelled from paradise.

1968

ANATOL SERBANTOVICH



ANATOL SERBANTOVICH (1941-1970) was born in the village of Ordatskiy, in the Mogilyov region. He graduated from the journalistic faculty of the Byelorussian State University. Two books of his verse were published in his lifetime — *Alphabet* and *Mine Field*, and another collection of his works entitled *Signet Ring* was published after his death.

"It's ■ sight I can't stand..."

"On that serene and cloudless early morning..."



* * *

It's a sight I can't stand ... and I beg,
Let me feel you, pain, let me feel.
It is hard for a man with one leg—
For a bird with one wing—harder still.

Here a solitary seagull runs
In the rain, and unable to fly.
Like rain-drops my heartbeat drums.
I can't look at her, though I try.

Through the village the March winds sing,
Drive the seagull through pools in the street.
Like a sail blows the wounded wing,
But that pinion she cannot beat.

She screams and she floats, poor thing;
In the puddles she's blown once more.
Only drags the white broken wing
In the rain-water, like an oar.

1966

* * *

On that serene and cloudless early morning,
Upon the country village river shore,
All nature round was still, as in our hunting,
When marksmen were spread out round here before.

A girl my age abandoned all her clothing,
Plunged lightly in, and midway in the stream,
Upon the waves uncertainly lay rocking,
Her firm-set breasts like two half-moons agleam.

The light and chastity in them was clearer
Than given to others, in all their lives to be.

My eyelids lowered themselves, as she drew nearer,
And left the water, not more pure than she.

A world was there revealed of such intricacy,
To whose perception still no man has come.
But, nonetheless, I felt I'd shared some mystery,
And for the moment was, it seemed, struck dumb.

1967

YANKA SIPAKOU



YANKA SIPAKOU was born in 1936, in the village of Zubrevichi, in the Vitebsk region. He graduated from the journalistic faculty of the Byelorussian State University and began life as a newspaper worker.

His first book of verse entitled *Sunny Shower* appeared in 1960. Since then he has published several collections.

Kastus Kalinowski (1838-1864), about whose execution the poet writes, was an outstanding Byelorussian revolutionary democrat, who fought against serfdom and autocracy, and was one of the leaders of the peasant rising of 1863 in Byelorussia and Lithuania. After the uprising was crushed, he was arrested and executed.

Realm of Mosquitoes

"The autumn trees look like an X-ray taken..."

Kastus Kalinowski's Noose

"Forest groves are bustling with one agitation..."

"I love the village in spring..."

Realm of Mosquitoes

Look what you're like,
My land,
Long ill-famed,
Realm of mosquitoes
By grandfathers named!

The cuckoo her tale in the dale collects:

— Po-lesye!

— Po-lesye!

The pines at times are creaking like clippers:

— Pri-i-i-pet!

— Pri-i-i-pet!

The pee-wit dips in the water to sip it:

— Pri-pet!

— Pri-pet!

The ore-barges hoot, stuck fast in the shallows:

— He-e-elp,

You fellows!

Like horses around, the launches rear:

— We-e-e'll

Get you clear!

As if they were hooves beat and churn the propellers:

— Avoid

Pripet

Shallows!

Look what you're like,
My land,
Long ill-famed,
The realm of geologists
Now you are named!

The stork slopes down on the marsh now drained—
To leave her old swamp
She now is constrained.
She must build her fledglings a rough new bower
Upon
The geologists' look-out tower,

Which she herself has with care selected
 As highly suitable for her fledglings....
 Through the forest sail ocean-going vessels,
 And on their hooters toot:
 — Po-les-s-s-sye!
 Our Pripet, quietly medi-arborean,
 Is now becoming a Mediterranean.
 Geese and pee-wits fly in from every quarter
 To swim
 In our water.
 You're welcome to wade in it, taste it and sip it,
 Our new
 Limpid Pripet!
 Then taste it, you cuckoos, our stories gather
 About our new river!
 Now look what you're like,
 My land,
 Long ill-famed.
 The realm of happy ones
 Now you are named!

1962

* * *

The autumn trees look like an X-ray taken:
 How nude they stand upon the fields and farms!
 They sadly sway, their heads in sorrow shaking,
 And even birds go flying by, hearts quaking,
 In fear of those long, naked, cold wet arms.

1966

Kastus Kalinovski's Noose

It is hard to become the corded noose
 That expects your neck, my lad....
 It were better that you and I bound the rye
 On the cart, till the wheels squeaked back.

I have tied the sheaves secure and tight,
 And they rustled, and wanted to sneeze.
 I was also the rein in your warm brown hand....
 It's hard to expect your neck, my lad!

I might have become a coarse tablecloth—
 The kind that your father wove long ago—
 And I'd have been spread on the festive board,
 And covered with food and drink and flowers.
 And you would have feasted till early morn,
 With black-browed Marisya as your betrothed....
 I'm scared to expect your neck, my lad!

Are there no other things one can do with a cord?
 I could first have been used for a hanging crib,
 And later have made a most wonderful swing
 For your children. And merrily they would have flown,
 Holding on to me tight, to the ceiling high.
 And wafting them, you would have heartily laughed....
 It's awful to hang round your neck, my lad....

Or maybe I might have become a lace
 For your birch-bast sandals. And with you then
 Would have gone a-tramping horizons far,
 In eternal peasant's *lapti* shod,
 With eternal peasant's truth as guide—
 And have stolen a little light from the dark....

Then cast me off from your neck, my lad!
 Help him quickly to slip my noose....
 Help him quickly....
 Help him.... Help....

Curse me, people, for evermore!
 Curse me!
 Curse me, I say!
 Curse my firmness today!

* * *

Forest groves are bustling with one agitation:
 In these groves—procreation.
 In this leafy world of feathery weddings
 In every nest they are hatching fledglings.
 It is cramped in the shell—
 With shoulders together,
 As if in some cell walled up for ever.
 Do you hear!
 Beaks a-tapping, the constant clamour?...
 As stubborn
 As any stone-breaker they hammer.
 Not long ago embryos, now they seek further,
 And break through windows on worlds of verdure.
 All the time are yielding the concrete foundations—
 In these groves—procreation!
 The chicks see the light, and cracking and battered,
 The fragments of earlier dwellings fall shattered....
 O breezes!
 Blow soft and rock their cradle—
 And let these exhausted ones rest a little.
 And see, some small creature is seeking its mother—
 With warm moist muzzle it nuzzles her udder,
 Its eyes meanwhile on the world unopened:
 The new-born to find its first breakfast is hoping,
 And trembles,
 And tumbles in lush vegetation—
 In these groves—procreation.
 And the fawns,
 And the aurochs-calves, panting and wilting,
 Are lying meanwhile on the grass, as if guilty.
 On the curving earth their weak legs with caution
 To support them they strain,
 Till they reach exhaustion—
 They want all over the wide world to canter
 As soon as upon their four legs they stagger....

And the gun-barrels
Drop in guiltless inaction—
In these groves—procreation!

1966

* * *

I love the village in spring, like harvest days:
For at that time, with special cares engaged,
Like grains of rye cast in the furrowed ways,
With wisps of smoke the huts burst through again.

1966

MIKOLA SURNACHOU



MIKOLA SURNACHOU (1917-1945) was born in the village of Slaboda, in the Gomel region. He studied at the literary faculty of the Gomel Teachers' Training College. He worked as a journalist. From the very first days of the Great Patriotic War he joined the ranks of the Army, and took part in the liberation of the Ukraine, Byelorussia, and Poland. He perished near Berlin, a few days before the final victory.

He belongs to the so-called wartime generation of Byelorussian poets, such as L. Gavrilov, A. Zhavruk, A. Korshak, D. Astapenko and others, who began their literary careers on the eve of the war, and during the war years, and perished, like Surnachou, in action against the German fascist invaders.

The majority of the poet's verses were written at the front, in the intervals between battles. Two books of his verses—*On Forest Trumpets* and *Crimson Dawn* were published posthumously.

He was awarded the Lenin Komsomol Prize.

In the Trampled Rye
Meditation

"You stand beside the smouldering ruin..."

In the Trampled Rye

Never more returning
Will this young lad come
To the nearby thicket,
To his native home.

Over him are scattered
Flowers here in blow.
And the war-scorched rye-ears
O'er his helmet bow.

Like a knight he's lying
In the trampled rye.
If you meet his mother—
Not a word you'll say...

1941

Meditation

And silence, and a deep-drawn groan,
And in one's heart all seems so dry,
And on the ground, as hard as stone,
As on a bed one wants to lie.

The fight grows fierce: with bayonet firm
One seeks to push to victory through.
But, maybe, those who'll greet their home
After the battle will be few.

And maybe I, a veteran, soon
Will fall upon the yellowed hay,
And o'er my bitter burning wounds
The sympathetic stalks will sway.

That does not worry me! What then?—
 For victory life's bright light I'll give.
 And if not I, the earth we've sown
 Will, all the same, arise and live.

1943

* * *

You stand beside the smouldering ruin,
 You hold your service cap, head bare.
 The settlement lies in a web of iron,
 But in the blue, the cranes appear.

But in one's heart?
 Can one look there,
 As in the nearby spring, to see?
 The peasant crouches, dumb with care;
 Where once the village used to be,
 The poisonous smoke spreads from the fire,
 The twigs of broom in red flames crack.

But in one's heart?
 There's furious ire!
 But in the sky?
 Our planes attack.

1944

YURAS SVIRKA



YURAS SVIRKA was born in 1933, in the village of Margovitsa, in the Vitebsk region. He finished the Byelorussian State University. He works as an editor in the Byelorussian Radio Broadcasting Service.

His first verses appeared in 1953. Since then he has published several books of verse, including *The Thunderstorm Is Whispering*, *Eternity*, *Pine Forest*, and others.

He is also engaged in translations from the languages of peoples of the USSR.

Do Not Fade...
Ballad About a Memorial
First Post-War Years



Do Not Fade...

In her eyes a wonderful gleam was beaming,
 And her smile was woven sunlight pure.
 She had never walked so till this evening!
 She had never bloomed like this before!

It was she—and not she—
 So confusing....
 Are they playing tricks on me, my eyes?
 Seemingly
 Twice the cherry-trees are blooming.
 Seemingly
 Sap is zooming, rising twice.

Obviously she felt the chill years looming,
 Bloomed to warm her soul, and ease the smart.
 “Blossom, then!”—I beg, words gladly coming.
 “Blossom, then!”—I beg, with wordless heart.

This is her farewell to youth's fine splendour;
 This is her last flowering in life's glade.
 This is no blossoming—but the blossom's ending.
 I know soon her flowers are doomed to fade.

I know
 She has all her powers collected,
 Those
 Which never faded anywise.
 Till this day she has preserved, protected
 Bloom on cheek and gleam within her eyes....

While old age still slumbers in the offing
 I shall whisper to my love today:
 “Leaves are falling
 And rose-petals dropping—
 Only you must bloom—
 Not fade away!”

Ballad About a Memorial

I hear in subterranean calm.
 I hear in subterranean gloom.
 A chisel's champing at the stone....
 If back to life you'd have me come,
 I beg you,
 Make me not of stone.
 Hammer more gently at my brow—
 From there
 A stream of blood may flow.
 And bind no firm-tied bandage round:
 No one in battle bound our wounds.
 My hair all matted, stuck with blood,
 Don't carve like locks of stone or wood—
 Let gentle breezes dry them out.
 Don't carve me lips of granite stout:
 They long have never kissed my wife.
 Don't give me vacant-looking eyes—
 They need to see my foe, my friend.
 Place no grenade gripped in my hand:
 I hurled all mine in the enemy trench.
 Carve no stone fingers
 That can't bend—
 How shall I stroke my small son's head?
 Don't fix my feet in a granite pad—
 I need to reach my home this once....
 And if you can't revive me thus—
 Then leave the granite for heroes' graves.
 Don't blunt good chisels all in vain.
 Don't tire young muscles and arms and hands....
 I ask not for myself—for the partisans.

1965

First Post-War Years

My bread was never kneaded tightly,
 Though queues for it were pretty tight.
 They raised the meek, threw down the mighty,
 Upheld like walls the weak one's right.

I spent the whole night in the bread-line,
 With biting gnats half-blind, half-dead.
 The most important news—the headline
 Was simply:
 “They have brought the bread!”

The endless queue then started breathing,
 And I could scarcely keep my feet.
 Like a pale roll of dough up-heaving,
 The long thin line stretched down the street.

And was I really then so husky?
 And was I really one tough case?
 The queue was shoving rather roughly,
 But I did not forsake my place.

They pushed me, packed me, sadly taxed me,
 They pressed on me both sides, behind,
 But I kept close to the local blacksmith,
 The lumberjacks, and similar kind.

Behind their brawny wide-set shoulders
 Not once did I have any dread.
 They found strong words for any bold ones
 Who tried to jump the queue for bread.

I do not know which years of trouble
 Placed poles of kindness in my heart,
 But in close contact with such people
 I was well-magnetized from the start.

MAKSIM TANK



MAKSIM TANK (Yevgeny Ivanovich Skurko) is a national poet of Byelorussia, and truly belongs to the people. He was born in 1912, in the village of Pilkovshchina, in Western Byelorussia. He studied in a private high school, but was expelled for taking part in a student demonstration. He was an active worker in the underground struggle, and cooperated with the Communist press. He was several times arrested by the Polish police. After the liberation of Western Byelorussia from bourgeois Poland, in September 1939, he became active in the social and literary life of the Republic. During the years of the Great Patriotic War he worked in the front-line and partisan press.

He is a member of the Central Committee of the Byelorussian Communist Party, a full member of the Byelorussian Academy of Sciences, and President of the **Executive of the Byelorussian Writers' Union.**

His first verses were published in the illegal journal, *The Break* in 1931. In 1936 his first collection of verses came out, and was confiscated by the Polish authorities. It was called *In Stages* which referred to the long journey to exile in Siberia.

In the years of Soviet power, the poet has published several dozen books of poetical works.

"Beginning my literary path," writes Maksim Tank, "I did not know how many difficulties I should have to meet, just as I did not know how many bright and unforgettable days lay ahead of me. There were few of us who began to sing our songs in the years of bondage, who had the good fortune to welcome the sun of liberty over our native land, and to be not only the singer of the people's sorrows, but of their great happiness!"

Maksim Tank has been awarded the State Literary Prize of the USSR, the State Prize of the BSSR, and the Yanka Kupala Literary Prize.



At Once When They Told Me

“Why plait your hair...”

Aye Maria

“Of course, it’s all the axe’s fault alone...”

Happiness

My Daily Bread

Tract on Poetry

Pines Above Lake Naroch

Let There Be Light

At Once When They Told Me

At once when they told me
You tore up my letter
I felt all was midnight and bitter.

At once when they told me
The match-makers came
I gave way to my grief and my shame.

At once when they told me
They are drinking and singing
It seemed that my death-knell was ringing.

At once when they told me
“She didn’t make merry,”
I thought ‘Who’s the man she will marry?’

At once when they told me
You cried the whole evening
I believed then again in our meeting.

At once when they told me
You had fled from your home
I knew then once more you would come!

1955

* * *

Why plait your hair, with ribbons flying
So furious foot it in the dance?
Why, all your beads for ever trying,
So often in the mirror glance?

He cannot show, in his reflection,
One hundredth part, your splendour fine,
Your pretty looks, so near perfection,
And how those eyes of yours can shine.

But just you call for me, my treasure,
 For but one moment by your side,
 Just call for me, give me the pleasure,
 And I will help you all you need,

To try on coloured ribbons, surely,
 Your earrings too—I'll take a glance,
 And tie the precious shoes securely
 Upon your feet before the dance.

But you have never quite forgotten
 That once I helped, some time ago,
 And carelessly the beads, the cotton,
 With clumsy hands I broke somehow.

1955

Ave Maria

Ringling cathedral bells call to the Ave.
 Left and right, through each narrow pathway,
 Thread, in their habits mournful, funereal,
 Flocks of sad nuns—like spirits ethereal.
 Old ones and young ones, all are here.
 Ave Maria!

Maybe I wouldn't have lingered untimely,
 Had I not noticed among them a comely,
 Slender young nun, whose age, I decided,
 Scarcely seventeen summers exceeded....
 Dark eyebrows arching, eyes brown and clear.
 Ave Maria!

Even beneath her dark vestments oppressive
 One could divine a form unsubmissive,
 Feet, which at carnival-time could go flying,
 All would be charmed with them, no denying,
 Fingers so slender, breasts firm and fair.
 Ave Maria!

Up at the cross she gazed with devotion.
 I need to plead with those brows my salvation!
 Really, poor sister, can you not see clearly,
 You waste your youth, and you pay too dearly?
 Oh, how such legs would go dancing bare!
 Ave Maria!

Imbibing their potions you have been poisoned,
 Rosaries round your hands they have fastened.
 Fear not, break clear, to none beholden!
 Standing corn in the field grows golden.
 Oh, how such hands would reap those ears!
 Ave Maria!

You with your dear one, warmed by loving,
 Never would part till the dawn was coming,
 In you would flourish a mother's power,
 You with your child in the sun would flower....
 Oh, how such breasts would suckle its tears!
 Ave Maria!

Maybe the mortal prayer I prattle
 Might be of aid to me in my battle.
 But alas!—they are calling and crying....
 She has gone after them, deeply sighing,
 Down the dark vaults to disappear....
 Ave Maria!

1957

* * *

Of course, it's all the axe's fault alone—
 Without that, in deep woods I'd not have gone,

 Should not have cut me down the resonant pine,
 Should not have carved from it my dulcimer fine.

Without the dulcimer, who'd have asked me, please,
Do play "Levonikha" at the wedding feast?

Had I not played, she'd not have brought, you see,
With charming smile, the heady wine to me.

And mid the merry laughter and glasses' clink,
She'd not have captured my poor heart, I think.

Each night now, stealing to her door I've gone—
Of course, it's all the axe's fault alone!

1960

Happiness

Human happiness, one with another,
As simple as ours together,

Consists of the salt of service,
Of bread brought in at the harvest,

Of sweat, of the road's dusty hardship,
Of loyal and deathless friendship,

Of our native land's horizon,
Of our songs ... and thus I reason:

If one part were changed, one token,
Would not happiness then be broken?

1960

My Daily Bread

My concern for you, dear native land,
For your harvest-time, your peaceful dreams,
For every tree where the green groves stand,

For the echoes of songs from your village greens,
My concern for you, dear native land,
Is my daily bread.

It was bitter with dust of the road for a time,
It was salt with the salt of tears for a time,
It was peppered with powder and shot for a time,
It was sweet with friendship, though, all the time,
Was my daily bread.

And do not place any other bread
In my knapsack, when off on the road I tread,
On my table, when with my guests I sit,
On my breast, when my hands lie crossed on it.

1961

Tract on Poetry

1

I'm aware
That various snobs will grimace
While reading this tract,
Pinned down by ironic riposts
To their grey signboard
"Poetry".

Let them not make such haste.
They make profit
On each soul deceased,
And from each new-born babe
They gain honours and titles,
And these lines may bring them
No little additional profit
And fame.
They'll find here defects:

The theme quite unusual,
 The form complicated.
 The bard, for some reason,
 Renounces the rhyme,
 (Though that is a sin
 Against national tradition),
 Old rhythms he sheds,
 (Though that is a sin
 Against plain innovation).

What else would you wish?
 When I come to die
 (As some crank once remarked of himself),
 Then it won't be from catching a cold,
 Or arterial sclerosis,
 But simply from thirst for new words,
 Which we lack
 For lately-found planets,
 New laws and relations,
 For love in all worlds.

2

And therefore I start here *ab ovo*.
 Poetry—that is an ages-long craving
 Of peaks for the sky,
 Of the grasses and trees
 For the sun.
 Poetry—that is an arch of the rainbow
 From each human heart
 To its dreams.
 Poetry—that is the friendship
 Of seeds for the soil,
 The arousing
 Of fire and of blood....
 But, in passing,
 Our best definitions,
 By the time
 That the ink dries,

Grow old:

And therefore I find them ridiculous,
 And therefore I look on them all
 As on epitaphs,
 Under whose shadow
 Historians of literature
 Still love to rummage.

3

Since old times
 Around the world's markets of art—
 Both on week-days and holy-days—
 Flocked
 The debasers-of-coinage,
 And charlatans all.

And today they still say:
 In order the better to see the wide world
 And the stars,
 You should shut both your eyes.
 In order the better to hear
 The incessant shore-surf
 Of humanity's voice,
 Of the thunder,
 Of seven salt seas—
 You should stop both your ears.

They summon us even to cease
 From inquisitive thoughts,
 One's right hand
 Wherewith one aspires
 To transform the whole world.
 They would make of the word
 But a curse, a mere oath,
 Having torn it
 From soil and from toil,
 From the burdens we feel.

4

But we're the world's foremost
 Explorers of future perspectives,
 Inventors, crusaders,
 Untiring creators
 Of joy in men's hearts.

Communism's for me
 Not an ikon,
 But life's very truth, without which
 I should place little value today
 On this earth.

I can set on one side the buying of bread and salt,
 Or meeting my sweetheart, or fame,
 But the struggle for this, my unquenchable dream,
 I never
 Will set on one side,
 For this is the highest of quests:
 And the sooner we solve it
 The sooner we'll solve, through the world,
 The problems of peace and of war,
 Of life and of death.
 And therefore we press on ahead
 Outstripping the sound-waves of words,
 And the space-ships of steel,
 And the sun.

5

I think
 Communism's a mighty majestic truth
 Which a man ought to see
 If he opens his eyes,
 Which a man ought to hear
 If he opens his ears,
 Which a man ought to tell
 If he opens his mouth:

And for this each must fight
 If he has a heart
 Which, like a Geiger-counter,
 Truth's rays can discover
 Hid deep in the strata of falsehood and dark,
 Or, like a magnetic needle,
 Will lead him to that final truth.

6

Do not overlook then
 The era in which we exist:
 An era of threatening strife
 Between stars that can guide us
 And stars long extinct,
 Between warm loaves of bread
 And the cold crust of prison,
 Between draughts of pure water
 And foul drops of poison,
 Between the green fires of spring
 And the war-crematoria,
 Between strings of the viol
 And strings of barbed wire,
 Between whirring of wings, of Picasso's white doves,
 And the shrieking of shells.
 You must not stand aside,
 But take part in the triumph
 Of truth's guiding star, of man's bread,
 Of the green flame of spring,
 Of the strings,
 Of the doves,
 Of dear life.

1962

Pines Above Lake Narocho

They slowly sway,
 The crowns of fragrant pines,
 Their trunks weep resinous tears
 From bullet wounds.

In brilliant weather,
On Naroch's western shores,
They carry the sun across the lake,
And help the fishermen
Draw their humble nets.
At evening time
They sing with Young Pioneers,
And jump the fire.

But in the storm,
With twisted,
Angular arms,
Hand in hand,
They cast aside
The lightning stroke, the thunder
And ragged clouds.

And were I even deaf,
I should know that roar
Among thousands of other pines,
And were I even blind,
Embracing and kissing them,
I should know them mine.

1969

Let There Be Light

Why is the saying "Let there be light"
Attributed always to some outworn God?
For it was not he, as everyone knows,
Who set the first camp-fire blazing bright,
To warm his old bones.
Not he, who with the steel and hard flint
Struck the spark
To cook himself soup,
And light up a hand-rolled whiff.

Not he with *Aurora's* salvo
Lit up the dark,
Not he, with his gear,
Who into our village came,
And said to my mother:
"Let there be light!"
And switched on the Ilyich lamp
In her kitchen....
Today that old lady
Blesses the name
Of our electrician.

1971

RAMAN TARMOLA



RAMAN TARMOLA was born in 1936, in the village of Mir, in the Grodno region. He graduated from the philological faculty of the Minsk Teachers' Training College. He works as an editor in the Byelorussian Television Service. His first verses came out in 1958. Later his collections—*Bomb Fragments and Dew, Full Moon, Renewal*, and others were published.

Ballad of Bomb Fragments
and the Early Morning Dew
My Wood
Grain

Ballad of Bomb Fragments and the Early Morning Dew

Thunder and lightning!

The night's pitch black.

The children are crying: "Mama, what's that?...
What's howling?

What's screeching?..."

"That's a bad black bird,
That's the drumming of rain on the roof you heard.
They're thrashing the grain somewhere in a heap—
The storm won't touch us....

Sleep now, sleep!..."

But they cannot sleep

from the lightning's glare,

And the thunder hammering a coffin somewhere.
Not a wink, not a wink.

Outside,

through the rain,

The longest night in the world draws its train.
The morning is clear.

Rainbow trembling drops.

Bomb fragments like dew,

and dew like steel blobs.

An unusual morning.

Unusual dew—

But you can cut your bare feet on it too....
In the courtyard the lads were playing around.
"Hot coal, hot coal—just look what we've found!"
Hot steel on the ground,

black crosses above

Cast a shade on the sun.

"Run quick, my love!"

Again drumming rain on the roof is heard.

"Mama, wait a bit—

are they metal birds?!"

Thunder and lightning.

And night pitch black.

"Mama, mama.... They're coming back!"

**"Run, my son!"—her lips were ready to say—
...A small frail corpse before her lay.
On the rainbow drops, the blood-drops spill.
On the grass—red dew,
in his heart—hot steel.
And his tiny infant fingers still clutch
The bomb fragments, which he treasured so much....
How much hate in my heart,
how much anger too,
Against war I shall carry my whole life through—
That children don't take the dew for steel blobs,
And fragments of bombs for dawn's dewy drops.**

1962

My Wood

My wood,
I have come to you as so often before.
On the crown of a fir-tree, a crow has stood
And croaks:
"Cra-a-aw, cra-a-aw, cra-a-aw!..."
That tree
I raised
with my hands on high.
Dear wood, I don't know
About you, but that crow
In some way recalls the fascist sly,
Who boasted about, some years ago:
"Even the woods shall be racially pure!"
And started to break the boughs of the birch,
And shot at nests where the fledglings were.
The foul fascist threat
would all besmirch....
Now your foliage sings,
Now your old voice rings,
Calling people to rest, from the distant way.

You are powerful, rich with a host of things—
 You are multi-national,

so to say.

I see: clasping hands, they securely stand—

The pine,

firs,

and oaks,

and the rest

of the brood.

I am sure

that in this lies your strength—

and that's grand,

My wood.

1962

Grain

Repeatedly I have the thought: Who first,
 And when, the finest words on grain has said?
 Of corn we've cooked up many and many a verse,
 But still,
 they do not fill the place of bread.

The rye was waving to the bounds far-off,
 And whispered in its beard: "Speak free and true
 About my smell in field
 and kneading trough—
 For such a task there's none to equal you!"

And so we sank about the hot salt sweat
 That stood out on our brows like drops of dew,
 Of bow-bent backs that burned like ovens yet....
 Our grandsires said that on humped backs grain grew.

And from the seed to round loaf in our hands
 We traced the path of bread, each step made clear.

The lovely corn in field

and fair verse stands,

And calls and draws us all

from far and near.

As if it wants to know and so define

Who is a drone,

and who has raised the grain,

Who sweated at the furrow, as at the line,

And who just simply grabbed for personal gain....

1965

VALYANTSIN TAULAI



VALYANTSIN TAULAI (1914-1947) was born in Baranovich, in the family of a railway worker. As a youth he joined the revolutionary struggle for the unification of Western Byelorussia with the Soviet Republic. He was several times arrested by the Polish political police, and at the age of sixteen was given two years in gaol by the Polish courts. He worked in the Polish underground movement, and was again arrested by border guards in 1934, and imprisoned. In September 1939 he was liberated by the Soviet Army. He took an active part in the literary life of the Republic. During the Great Patriotic War, he was liaison man with a partisan detachment, and joined a special intelligence group.

He published collections of verse entitled *Selected Poems*, *Verses and Longer Poems*, *Selected Works* and others.

"Verses From Lukishki Gaol", included in the anthology, were, as their title makes clear, written in prison. Lukishki was a whiteguard Polish gaol in Vilnius, when Western Byelorussia and Lithuania were under the Polish yoke. Pilsudski's government kept its political prisoners isolated there. Among them were Maksim Tank, Pilip Pyastrak, Valyantsin Taulai and other poets and writers.

My Last Word
Stone Upon Stone
Verses From Lukishki Gaol
Comrade of My Spring
My Verses
May Day Banners
To Tutors



My Last Word *

— Any requests?—In vain you ask me thus.
Without that farce fix on around old scars
your fetters, cast me with your prison crust
for many a lengthy year behind steel bars.

And judge me now in “law and order’s” name—
while you may judge—then we may break our cells,
and ’neath our skinny, bleeding hands again
will crack and crumble down cold prison walls.

A communard am I! And there are many such
in this for centuries groaning, sorrowing land.
The rich have never smashed us in their clutch,
their narrow cells and gallows powerless stand.

The gilded kingdoms and deceits fall through,
and so your lordship too will pass away.
Is this the first time you condemn the truth?
Am I the first one you condemn today?

Before you lies upon the dark green baize
the law signed years ago ’neath Tsardom’s yoke.
You judge by laws of past forgotten days,
torn down beneath the thunder of the folk.

That’s all, my lords. Your sentence is at hand.
I go to gaol and know—there’ll come the days
when my short speech is uttered to the end
by eloquent Maxims on the barricades.

Grodno, in prison.
September 25th, 1929.

* Until 1932 the Polish lords ruled in West Byelorussia according to laws signed under the Tsar in 1903.— *Tr.*

Stone Upon Stone

To our friends in a good cause—
the Soviet Komsomol members.

On the high scaffolding history cries louder:
“Hey, rise more lively, generation of youth!
Builder-creator of life’s newest order,
rise with the dawn of the new day of truth!”

Clearly the path to our happiness beckons—
no truer path to our future is known.
Stone upon stone, and brick upon brick then,
let us create, like a poem, our vast home!

Steel and cement we are bonding, preparing;
walls will arise and grow higher each day.
Powers of darkness stand dumb and despairing—
they cannot stop our construction—not they!

Stone upon stone, and brick upon brick then:
hey, who can hinder our soaring dome?
Glory to brother-constructors who quicken
with common brick our majestic vast home.

Grodno, in prison.
January 1930

Verses from Lukishki Gaol

When thunder ripens in my heart
and makes Lukishki shudder—
no verses with my pen I start,
no poems in note-books utter.

For any stump of pencil here
the law taboos. Ignore it,
and if they find one—one thing’s clear:
your ribs will suffer for it.

But why then lie, and risk the lash?
 They won't be found by the sentry,
 these poems I write by the lightning's flash,
 and enter in my memory.

Let noose and threat hang o'er my head
 foretelling the cell and hunger....
 the lightning soon will strike you dead
 you boring misery-mongers.

In prison I can sit or lie —
 but my poor poems I pity —
 they need to shout from banners high,
 go marching through the city.

Look through your spy-hole, day and night —
 unseen by your eye accurséd,
 I stubbornly, long, with poet's might,
 saw through your bars with verses.

Vilnius, Lukishki, 1935.

Comrade of My Spring

So it maybe our paths are not destined to merge then,
my darling:
 They have long ago drawn far apart — both mine and yours....
 You will know about me by my songs, which crackling
and sparking,
 will protect my springtime heart from confinement's
cold cares.
 Go without me, my girl — may the birches not weep
above you,
 and not shake on your soul the sadness oft wafted by years,
 for is it worth grieving, though parted and knowing
I love you
 if our paths bear afar the pain we have shared and the
fears?

**I have parted with much, only not with our spring —
that's undoubted:
tell me, how could I live without that to the end of my days?**

**I recall, I recall, once with you a briar-rose we encountered,
and we knew not if that was a rose, or our flowering eyes.**

**Though the briar has faded long since,
it remains a glad memory.**

I preserve its pale petals—a past recollection of all—
and I bear it through life, unsubdued by the storms
and by treachery,
that my heart should be warmed, that the bluing horizons
should call....

Should my pathway behind the high walls
find a sudden ending,
like a blood-sodden wing from the bars droop the flag
at last —
you must look, my beloved, through the leaves
of the branches bending,
from the borderland hill-post of spring
on my snow covered path.

And my song will then trill like a skylark,
to heaven mounting,
it will wing to you—then press it, though once,
to your heart.
In warm sower's handfuls our lives we have cast
without counting,
so that spring should blossom for others
in these martyred parts.

Vilnius, Lukishki, 1936.

My Verses

**Mayakovsky cordially warned before:
don't dispose of verses out of hand:**

once they're written, lock them in a drawer,
later read and judge and print—be damned!

I did not forget this good advice;
Polish gentry “helped” me very well
locking up not drawers containing lines
but the author, in their prison sell.

True, they judged them—that you cannot hide—
sleuths, pick where you like on every side,
each one swore by Christ the crucified,
these were not just poems—but dynamite.

Then the Prosecution, versed in law,
looked and looked again at each line there,
even poked it cautiously with his paw,
and awarded me—each line—one year.

I was sent to lie boxed-up awhile—
polishing up my poems and my backside.
Dreams of printing sometimes raised a smile;
Skorina and Gutenberg have died....

There we lay—our bones began to ache,
the poems', the author's, and the reader's too.
Many verses started going grey,
many were lost, and can't be read, it's true....

But one thing you cannot cast aside:
They are polished, and like steel they sing;
Ringing chains I wore when they were made—
Maybe therefore, too, my verses ring.

Lida, June 7th, 1941.

May Day Banners

Awake with the dawn, my dearest companion—
 Before on such nights no sleep did we crave....
 Now look, how each Mayday flag and banner
 Is rinsed by the dawn, like a golden wave.

And now, like free-pinioned and powerful eagles,
 They're stretching their wings to storm-winds on high.
 But once we held them, like little eaglets,
 Pressed fast to our hearts, and then taught them to fly.

In our bosoms we bore them that night, undetected,
 To tall silver birches surrounding the path,
 And set them aloft on long-since selected
 And graceful birch-crowns, as their lonely mast.

We knew very well, hostile hands, as ever,
 Would tear them down by their wings in wild hate:
 They can't stop that sweep that calls people together
 To the great high road, from the village gate.

Beneath their horses' hooves we were trampled—
 Say friends, who can count the comrades who fell?
 The pain, believe me, was no less ample
 Among those red-pinioned heralds as well.

Then in Verasin died the days of sadness.
 Red as dawn, freedom's flag we raised in our fist,
 And out of gaol came the lads and the banners
 Which long, long since the winds had not kissed.

Today again, see, they are freely flying,
 They want to embrace the tormented world.
 Hold fast your sharp bayonet, heads high, defying,
 If you truly wish that such flags stay unfurled.

Lida, Byelorussia,

May 1st, 1941.

To Tutors

To stand beside those young in life,
in childhood's human brotherhood—
that's honour grand, and duty bright,
that's tutorship, and motherhood.

At first to rouse in heart and mind
the thirst to learn of everything—
and later on the thoughtful kind
to lead toward the bright clear spring.

All blown about by wayside dust,
at parting roads, at moments dour,
the people always kept for us
a fount of wisdom and of power.

Then teach the young to scoop by hand
life-giving waters from its bowl,
so that they love our folk, our land,
grow wiser, kinder in their soul.

Valkavichi, 1942.

KASTUS TSVIRKA



KASTUS TSVIRKA was born in 1934, in the village of Zelyonaya Dubrava, in the Minsk region. He finished the Byelorussian State University and took a post-graduate course. He is a Candidate of philological science.

His first verses appeared in print in 1953. After that he published several books of collected verse, including—*Such Hearts We Have*, *The Streams Are Flowing*, *The Black Earth*, and others. He writes with a deep love of the countryside and of its people.

Black Earth

Grouse Language

"Far beyond the hay-heaps drying..."

Partisan Song



Black Earth

From under your plough—and seen far and wide—
Straight over the field, beyond the last path,
There flows and obediently lies on its side
The fertile black earth.

The fertile black earth! Thin steam-wisps rise.
Like bread from the oven brought forth,
'Neath the clouds, as beneath a towel it lies,
The fertile black earth.

Our ancestors—ancestors even of theirs—
First turned you in dire times of dearth.
You've known countless hosts of wood and steel shares,
You fertile black earth.

Innumerable builders, and makers of song,
And wise men who knew your true worth—
Like a mother you nurtured them, ages long,
You fertile black earth.

The foundation of all. Without that would man
Reach the stars from the place of his birth?
And therefore this song of praise I began
To fertile black earth.

1963

Grouse Language

Say, do you know, down there where freshets spout,
What grouse at dawn have got to grouse about?

In spring, when on the limes, like little cups
Are tinkling, slightly tipsy, bursting buds,
And where old stumps there in the thinned-out groves
Beneath the sun cast off their icy robes,

While 'neath the forest snows the murmurs start
 From streams which simply flow into your heart—
 Then emperor-grouse will grumble at his life:
 "I'll sell my sheepskin coat and buy a wife,
 I'll sell my sheepskin coat and buy a wife...."

But when the north wind through the forest blows,
 And covers all with hoary frost and snows,
 And squeezes into rutted lumps the roads,
 And seizes that old grumbler by the toes,
 The grouse goes grumbling on a different note:
 "I'll sell my wife and buy a sheepskin coat,
 I'll sell my wife and buy a sheepskin coat...."

1965

* * *

Far beyond the hay-heaps drying,
 where between the clouds, dreaming-gleaming,
 pale stars are lying dying,
 The geese—honk-honk!—go flying.
 Above huddled huts with small windows,
 (which stand silent by motionless lindens),
 Above the road's mire—trembling takes them!—
 above the cold gleam of the lakes then,
 Over honeycombed cities and gardens
 (where in modern electric apartments
 folk sleep soundly in their pyjamas),
 Above the forest branches
 (which spread a wide curtain of darkness),
 Above lakeside rushy regions,
 beyond beacons,
 beyond the aeons,
 Like wandering bards of peace—
 Go the geese.
 Out of sight ... out of sight ... out of sight....
 The geese are in flight.

And again, and again, and again
 the distance, range beyond range,
 With resounding key they unlock.
 They will fly, a wedge-shaped flock,
 over rivers and fields of grain,
 and the wind-whistling valleys and plain
 Of the fertile Ukraine.

From their highway, all-revealing,
 they will soon exchange warm greeting
 With Elbrus, looming up through the cloud,
 beneath its eternal white shroud.

They slowly pass these dominions,
 And beneath their wide-spread pinions,
 Like a patch on green earth, dramatic,
 Lies the blue Adriatic.

And there—

 the lush pasture-savanna—

 let us through, young rainbow-banner!—

Bright Africa....

Far beyond the hay-heaps drying—

 what are roads and boundaries when flying?

 What are borders and governments vying?—

The geese are in flight.

The wild white geese

 are in flight.

1969

Partisan Song

You thought then, fascist,

 that having thrown my naked corpse

 by the icy wall,

You had taken my all:

 my shirt,

 which saved me from freezing death;

 my land,

 where the stork is a-clatter on branchy willows yet;

my Byelorussian tongue,
 whose well-spring murmurs unceasing in humble huts;
 my freedom,
 which gave me wings for the highest flight.

But you miscounted:

you forgot the song
 which remained in my heart.

And that sweet song restored me all:

my shirt,
 which saved me from freezing death;
 my land,
 where the stork is a-clatter on branchy willows yet;
 my Byelorussian tongue,
 whose well-spring murmurs unceasing in humble huts;
 my freedom,
 which gave me wings for the highest flight!

1973

VASIL VITKA



VASIL VITKA was born in 1911, in the village of Yevlich, in the Minsk province. He was a factory worker, studied at a trade and technical school, and began to work in newspapers. During the Great Patriotic War, he worked for the *Soviet Byelorussia* newspaper, for the satirical journal *Partisan's Cudgel*, and for the newspaper and poster publication *Crush the Fascist Swine!* Since the children's paper, *The Rainbow*, was first published in Byelorussia, he has been its permanent editor.

His first verses were published in 1928, and his first book of verses came out during the war, in 1944. It was called *Hardening*, and was followed by *Midday*, *Loyalty*, *The Bayonet and the Rose*, *Testing*, and others.

He works a great deal in the field of poetry for children, and has published numerous books of stories and verse for the younger readers, which have earned him great popularity.

He also engages in playwriting and translation. He is laureate of the State Prize of the BSSR.

Nicolo Paganini
Immortality
Hardening
The Bayonet and the Rose
My Dad
Rye

Nicolo Paganini

The fiddle-bow dumb night in twin halves slashed.
The storm rolled on. The seagull in despair
Screamed to its young. The lightning flashed
And doused in ocean depths its livid glare.

Then from the deep there surged and spread
The waves, in bounding circles, far and wide.
And there we caught the gleam through years long dead
Of one small trembling sail on memory's tide.

The beating waves tore at the shore of time,
But were exhausted, weakened, fell apart;
And in our morning light, from farthest clime,
A ship sailed on the course set by man's heart.

1940

Immortality

"I die in battle—count me as a Communist."
And thus they fell.
The Party its invincible flag unfurled.
It's ranks still swelled.
And in that crucial hour
The people's spirits rose, a mighty sea,
And waves of anger smote upon the shore.

The fallen went again into the flames,
Already Communists
For evermore,
Because the Party rose up in their names,
Their thoughts,
Their songs,
Their immortality.

1941

Hardening

A simple, trusting youth, naive, untaught,
I yearned to know the secrets of the forge.
Beneath such ringing hammer-blows, I thought
That life itself would all for me disgorge.

So taught me lame Vladim, one of our folk,
Our blacksmith, who was nick-named "one-and-six".
Still memory curls around me warm dark smoke,
And with it busy blows reechoing mix.

They came then to the forge from far and near,
One with a tyre, another with a share—
"Hey, sonny, blow the fire up—treadle here!"
The bellows sang—a wonderful affair!

And sometimes to the smith they'd lead a horse
For shoeing. I knew straightway what to do—
I'd file the nails, and forge the heads, of course,
And offer up with tongs the red-hot shoe.

Before the harvest what hot times we had!
From distant hamlets, fifteen versts away,
They'd bring their sickles to be toothed, then lad,
I got no proper sleep for many a day.

And so the fire was never dimmed, nor died,
Vladim gave me the forge when he had done,
And so the leather apron round I tied,
And forged my first real horse-shoe on my own.

I grasped the trade—and there was but one thing
Which up till now I could not quite conceive—
Although the years have passed, spring after spring,
My troubled memory it will not leave.

It is the way of hardening—that's the bound
 Of my long search for knowledge, as it stands—
 But then, old friend, the secret still unfound,
 I placed my soul entirely in your hands.

You hardened it in ice, in lakes and streams,
 In life's bright colours, and in each nuance,
 In faint and hazy smoke of my first dreams,
 And rarely—in unhappiness and mischance.

But now another teacher plays your part,
 A master hand at hardening, and severe,
 And in the tongs he boldly nips my heart,
 And heats it in the fire of trials here.

Till blinding white. And with the sledge of truth
 He beats and straightens me, then—in the tub.
 And thus I go again, a merry youth
 Through all life's troubles and misfortune's rub.

Again I find it light to live, as then.
 I praise my schooling which unshaken stands,
 And you, my good Vladim, a smith of men,
 And your trustworthy, kind and competent hands.

1941

The Bayonet and the Rose

Dried is the bed, full of sand,
 Where the spring used to flow.
 Where the stove used to stand
 The bricks are all blackened now.

Where the battlefield lay,
 All's overgrown with grass,
 Garbed in goose-foot grey,
 Nettles, a stinging mass.

Only there, where you fell,
 By the hut, long ago,
 The ground is blood-stained still—
 There the grass does not grow.

Your memorial today
 Is incorruptibly dear—
 A bayonet thrust in the clay,
 A rusty helmet near.

Your memory, friend, still blows
 Fresh, unconstrained by a tomb—
 A bush of the wild dog-rose,
 All in a blaze of bloom.

Whoever moves apart
 Roses and foliage too,
 There falls upon his heart
 Blood, like the living dew.

The rusty blade of steel
 With prickles sharp has grown.
 Ever fresh and real,
 This soldier's memorial stone.

1956

My Dad

— You're dumb then? Very well—be dumb, be dumb....
 Again they crushed his fingers in the door,
 Again the silent sufferer then they flung
 In the mouldy straw upon the prison floor.

They wait—and then next day, same every time....
 But now they cannot wait, the questioning goes:
 — You still, then, Chairman, have not changed your mind,
 You still will not resign from your kolkhoz?

...In youth he'd knocked around and learned a lot,
 And many a road he trod, and job he tried,
 And finally an excellent trade he got—
 For well-sewn boots was famous far and wide.

His prices were not high for such fine work—
 Fill up the top-boots to the brim with rye.
 And though you wish, you can't say one bad word—
 Just wear your boots—you're welcome then to try.

But working as a landlord's hired hand,
 Or as apprentice, at his bow-backed toil,
 He never could forget the smell of land,
 In dreams would crumble in his palm the soil.

Life hardens us, as year by year it flows.
 So, one high spring, still held in memory warm,
 His fellow-villagers founded their kolkhoz,
 And chose him as first Chairman of the farm.

All that was long ago. And evil crows
 Came swooping and enslaved our native land....
 — You're dumb then? Very well, be dumb! Then blows.

.

Beside the village road a grave you'll pass,
 Wherein he stubbornly in silence rests.
 The mound is overgrown with long coarse grass,
 A maple-tree its leafy branches spreads
 Above a headstone with a blood-red star.

In this severe and incorruptible time,
 To live my life like that I too am glad,
 Because I knew him well, that hero fine—
 He was my own dear dad.

Rye

The infinite eternity of the minute
Remember still, and hold it high,
Like me, my autumn guelder-rose within it,
My lingering cornflower in ripe rye.

Like a first offering, and a first confession,
So suddenly the rye-field rang,
And bitter happiness and fear and vengeance
In one chorale that minute sang.

One God above us both—the mighty Bach.
The organ's roar, the wormwood wafting,
The avid kiss upon your lips, as stark
As hungry time, and everlasting.

My love, you hold the universe in keeping,
Alone between the earth and skies.
Each bearded ear—a golden keyboard sweeping,
Each straw—a vibrant string replies.

The infinite eternity of the minute
Remember still, and hold it high,
Like me, my autumn guelder-rose within it,
My lingering cornflower in ripe rye.

ANATOL VYALYUGIN



ANATOL VYALYUGIN was born in 1923, in the village of Moshkany, in the Vitebsk region. He studied at the literary faculty of the Minsk Teachers' Training College, and worked in periodicals. He fought in the Great Patriotic War. At the present time he is the editor of the poetry section of the literary journal *The Flame*.

He first came out with verses in 1938, and has since published several collections of verses. He translates from the Russian, Ukrainian and Lithuanian languages. He is the author of many scenarios of documentary films about Byelorussia.

He has been awarded the State Prize of the BSSR, and the Yanka Kupala Literary Prize. He is an Honoured Worker of Byelorussian Culture.

Ballad of the Urals Tank



Ballad of the Urals Tank

A great armoured giant—
In the Urals smoke-laden,
With gantry-cranes creaking,
In the workshops they made him.

And called forth in anger,
From the cold ore straining,
There he stood at the ready
To start his campaigning.

With labour unsleeping,
A skilled working fellow
His steel hull then painted
As green as the meadow.

And astride the long cannon,
Which frightened foes haunted,
On the turret he fashioned
A red star, five-pointed.

He urgently laboured
Two nights without stopping,
His lids red and weary,
From tiredness dropping.

But, shaking his shoulders,
He never once slumbered—
Just his far distant cabin,
And his mother remembered.

Then he wrote on the turret,
His heart beating quickly:
“Win me back my dear birthplace,
My village Sunitsi!”

With this clear behest then,
After passing its testing,

The tank was whirled westward,
Day and night never resting.

Drawn by steam locomotives,
He endlessly lurches
From the Ural cedars
To Smolensk silver birches.

To fuel his engines
The tankmen then hurried,
And saw painted letters
Upon his strong turret.

As they entered the hatchway,
Each one read there swiftly:
“Win me back my dear birthplace,
My village Sunitsi!”

And with this clear challenge,
And true to its order,
The tank surged to battle,
To the Byelarus border.

Its long cannon thundered,
Its machine-gun spat slaughter,
As it crushingly lumbered
Through the foe's armoured quarter.

And no matter what weapons
On that Ural tank batter,
Its powerful armour
They never can shatter.

And the tank still attacking,
The foul foe defeated,
And screaming in terror,
The green ranks retreated.

Their uniform tatters
To the tank's tracks were sticking....

It burst into a village,
The dust round it licking.

The sweating tank-driver
From the hatchway looked further—
The village was empty.
No smoke. Not a murmur.

One old woman came hobbling:
“Thank God it’s no Fritz!”
“What’s this village, then, granny?”
“Why, this is Sunitsi!”

1944

ANATOL VYARTSINSKI



ANATOL VYARTSINSKI was born in 1931, in the village of Demeshkovo, in the Vitebsk region. He graduated from the journalistic faculty of the Byelorussian State University, and worked on various periodicals. He was chief of the literary section of the *Literature and Art* gazette. At the present time he is the poetry consultant to the Byelorussian Writers' Union.

He is a playwright and works in the field of literary translation. He began to print his verses in 1954. He has since published collections of verse, including *Song About Bread*, *Selected Verses*, *Three Silences*, *Signs of Humanity*, etc.

His work is full of tenderness, understanding of suffering, respect for humanity and life. This is most clearly seen in his "Requiem" included in this anthology, which is dedicated to those Byelorussians who fell victims in the years of the war. In Khatyn, one of Byelorussia's great war memorials—the grave-yard not only of those who fell there, but all over Byelorussia—is a square, subdivided into four smaller ones. In three of them living birch-trees stand, and in the fourth burns the eternal flame reminding of the fact that every fourth citizen of Byelorussia had perished in the war against German fascism.

Lenin's Laughter
Requiem for Every Fourth
A Man Is a Crank
The Sea, the Sun, I and Our Lovely One...



Lenin's Laughter

Revolution marched — a-left, a-left!
 They fought, life or death, the rank and file.
 And Lenin battled. And Lenin laughed;
 the revolution was served by his smile.
 Revolution marched. The time had come
 of whirlwind change, and hunger, and wreck.
 Many enemies threatened with death and doom.
 But Lenin's spirit they could not shake.

Lenin remained as he was at the start—
 not only a menacing, punishing sword,
 but the revolution's genial guard,
 Ilyich, her sensitive soul, and her word.
 Lenin's genius knew long ago:
 not ill, but good, revolutions sow.
 For goodness dark blinkers don't suit the mood.
 A cheerful march goes best with the good.
 Yes, sunny Mayday, bright dreams of peace!
 A smile sits well on goodness' face!

With such a smile Ilyich often went—
 the people's leader, the masses' friend,
 with humour which came from the soul of the folk....
 The People's First Commissar loved a joke.
 He knew the worth of a friendly jest—
 he laughed, inspired, from the depths of his breast.
 He knew the hammer and sickle's strength—
 he laughed out youthful, ardent, at length.
 And Russia listened, and loved his laugh,
 and found new power upon her path.
 And history heard his laughter too,
 and smiled herself, and said: "Good for you!"

I look for his laughter, each trace, all the while,
 and, faithful to Lenin's living smile,
 from A to Z I've learned the worth
 of his unsparing, inspiring mirth.

There wisdom laughed at each stupid scene,
 a generous soul—at all that was mean.
 Simplicity laughed at all show and fuss,
 sincerity laughed at all doubt and mistrust.
 The truth can laugh at the blackest lies,
 and bright tomorrow at darkness which flies....
 The road we shall master step by step—
 Lenin's lessons are with us yet.
 We learn from Lenin the way to fight.
 We shall learn from him—how to laugh aright!

1963

Requiem for Every Fourth

During the years of the past war
 every fourth Byelorussian perished.

(From documents)

Oh, my mother wanted then
 To marry me to the fourth young man!

(Byelorussian folk song)

Prologue

Have you seen a wood
 where it's bright as noon?

Have you seen a forest on earth
 where every second pine is gone,
 or at the least, every fourth?

That is what happened to my dear folk.

With fire and blood there strode
 a pitiless war, which people broke,
 and the gaps it mowed, it mowed.

Come the spring they will not grow again,
 they will gape like a desert of death....

Have you seen that wood

where the gaps are plain?

Have you seen such a forest on earth?

First Canto

My whole land took up war without fears,
 from the old to the young,
 From Talash, with his hundred years,
 to Kazei, just begun.
 Prostrate they fell, age and youth,
 Every fourth.

Many were tracks of falling stars.
 Skies were as black as death.
 Also on earth the trace disappears—
 every fourth.

After victory the land grew bright—
 thunderous salutes, people's mirth.
 But festive tables did not greet
 every fourth.

Long the widows their husbands wait,
 mothers—the sons of their birth,
 They can't believe that death was their fate—
 every fourth.

We remember our loss and our pain.
 Memory whispers their worth.
 Oh, how we miss each one again—
 every fourth!

Second Canto

Every fourth one perished—
 lasting peace to their names!
 Every third one ravished,
 mutilated or maimed.

Every second one carried
 burns and scars on his flesh.
 All, we all were harried,
 wounded hearts bled afresh.

Trenches yawned and craters,
 stoves gaped in rubble and dust,
 like a great wound, outrageous,
 on the body of Byelorussia.

Third Canto

We count so: every fourth.
 Maybe it's every third?
 Mown by cold and dearth
 children died unheard.

Still we did not include
 those whose injuries healed.
 Never healed was their wound—
 soon their life forces failed.

How many simply fell—
 no grave, no memorial lines!
 How many children as well
 afterwards blasted by mines!

We count so: every fourth—
 but that's an approximate score,
 that figure's not the full truth,
 our losses were even more.

Epilogue

A Lesson in Conjugation

That loss there's no forgetting,
 the gaps aren't grown over yet....
 Children, do you know your lesson?
 Children, can you conjugate?

I go,
 you go, we go,
 but he does not go—
 that is death.

**I sing,
you sing, we sing too—
he sings not, every fourth.**

I go,
you go, we go past,
we go striding upon firm earth.
But he does not go
on green grass,
he lies beneath—
every fourth.

I love,
you love, we love.
Above us
the blue skies,
the leaves!—
Just open your hearts on life's path.
Oh, if *they* still but lived with their loves—
every fourth!

1965

A Man Is a Crank

A man is a crank.... He sees one minute drop of dew,
and within it the mighty sun lies before his eyes.
A man is a crank.... He picks up a sea-shell, and lo,
within it he hears the roar of the ocean tides.
A man is a crank.... He sees a straight even road,
but avidly dreams of a way of thorns and doubt,
with its steeps and twists and hazards and heavy load,
and along it he'll plod all the while his legs hold out.
A man is a crank.... When faced with irreparable loss
he is not resigned to it in his soul's deepest part.
To injustice he's not resigned, nor the half-lie's dross.
He won't give up though you drive a stake thro' his heart.

A man is a crank.... There is much that he might forswear,
 But he won't give in though he doesn't sleep at night.
 He still believes his perpetual motion idea,
 in a panacea, in his power to set things right.
 A man is a crank.... No failure his hope can touch,
 nor his faith in life, nor break it nor undermine.
 A man is a crank.... And his crankiness is such—
 it is his salvation, his human spirit's sign.

1966-67

The Sea, the Sun, I and Our Lovely One...

Naively I thought: "You are mine alone."
 Like an owner I thought: "You belong to me."
 But they opened my eyes—the sun and the sea—
 with the sea and the sun I share, but don't own.
 You have run to the sea. And he, full of verve,
 and seething with joy, flings round you his waves.
 He loves you—the uttermost pleasure he craves,
 and yields you his passion without reserve.
 I can't turn my eyes away from the sight.
 The sea and a woman! Two elements free—
 firm-moulded breasts, and the waves of the sea,
 and whitening foam around shoulders more white!
 From such an encounter, from such love withal,
 the white-winged sea-gulls are born, it is clear.
 I gaze on the sea-gulls in wild despair—
 if at least I might name them my daughters all!
 The ancient god of the sea I demand,
 and pour forth my soul in an earnest prayer:
 "Return to me my beloved here,
 return my beloved upon dry land!"
 And see, my prayer has been heard, perchance—
 You emerge—your fingers all salt between
 your lips all salt, your eyes sea-wave green.
 "In love with the sea!" I think at once.

I run to meet you—pretend for a start
that I do not notice the sea in your eyes,
that I do not sense where sorrow lies,
that I do not feel the pain in my heart.
I make pretence—I am not Othello.
“Take a rest,” I quietly say to you.
Every touch of yours is treasure true.
But I see:

the sun’s kissed you too, bold fellow!
You stretch out your arms to him, to his light—
the sun, your lover, you take to your heart.
The sun and a woman! No tearing apart!
Well—may he make your day more bright!
If I were as ardent and young as the sun,
if I were as gentle and gay as that one,
I too should caress your neck and your cheek,
and to woo you away from others would seek....
Naively I think: “Win her back once more!”
I think a free element I can possess,
and make of a goddess a slave, no less.
A goddess one can only adore.
An element one can only admire.
One can never recapture, possess, nor buy her.
One can only adore, one can only adore.
Woe to the owner, woe, woe is me, O sea!...

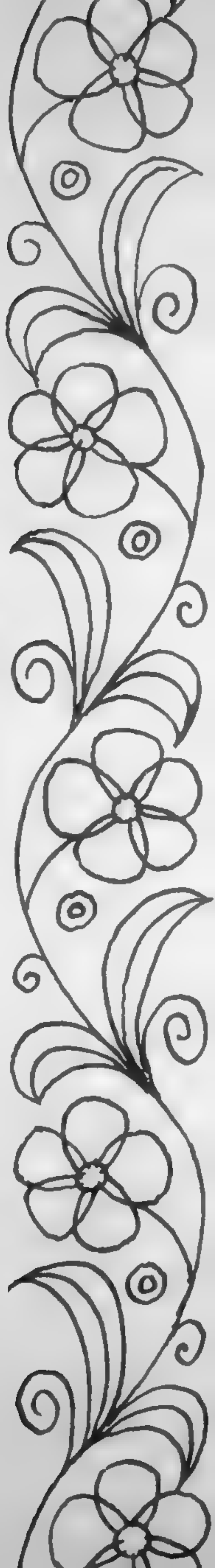
YAUGENIA YANISHCHITS



YAUGENIA YANISHCHITS was born in 1948, in the village of Rudtsi, in the Brest region. She graduated from the philological faculty of the Byelorussian State University. She was a Komsomol worker.

Her first verses appeared in 1965. She is one of the youngest poets appearing in this anthology. She has published a book of lyrics, entitled *Snowy Flurry*. Her work is delicate and appealing, and owes much to the rich fund of Byelorussian folk songs.

"Seek me out, send me the call!..."
Our Neighbour Pelagca
"When fire directed at the bird..."



Viktor, Kostya,
 Peter, Dima,
And Nazar, the youngest here.
...On their yellowed photo glimmers
Suddenly a fallen tear.

I daren't question
 why our neighbour
Only quietude now craves.

But our neighbour Pelagea
Had five sons ... now five cold graves....

1969

* * *

When fire directed at the bird
Scorches the free and unclipped wing,
And when the soul still seeks a word,
But it has passed into a song,

And if I laugh or even weep
When quiet evening shadows fall,
Then tell me, tell me, what do I mean
For your unsure bewildered soul?

1970

ALYAKSEI ZARYTSKI



ALYAKSEI ZARYTSKI was born in 1911, in the village of Khotimsk, in the Mogilyov province. He was a factory worker. Before the war he finished the Moscow Institute of Foreign Languages. Throughout the Great Patriotic War he was on active service.

He came out with the first of his verses in 1927. In 1932, his first poetical collection appeared, entitled *Epic Fragments*. Altogether he has published some ten books of poetry.

His translated works include *Tales and Legends* by the Armenian poet O. Tumanyan, the poem "Four years" by the classic Lithuanian writer K. Donelaitis, a collection of poems by Sorbian poets, and others.

The Girl and the Smith
"I was in the fire..."
What's to Be Done?
Concerning Wine
If I Only Knew

The Girl and the Smith

Once ripe rye was being reaped
By a girl—eighteen or so—
Suddenly the combine ceased—
What a blow—a blow!

Fine—quite near the smithy lies:
“Smith, my lad, I need your aid!”
Hands start work, but big brown eyes
Steal towards the maid....

Soon September stole away.
And November. Winter came.
He remembered her each day,
Waited her again.

Suddenly a ringing cry
Echoed as merrily as before:
“Smith, I need your aid, dear boy,
Help me out once more.

I was hurrying home so fast—
Now, just look, my sledge won't go.
See, the runner broke in half.
What a blow—a blow!”

'Neath his strong and skilful hands
Bends the beaten willing steel.
With a timid smile he stands,
Murmurs to the girl:

“Don't forget, my pretty flower,
Take this way again, of course,
If you need me, any hour—
Anything I'll forge!”

“What! Can you forge happiness?
You would be a clever man!”
“Well, if you will help, I guess
Even that we can!”

* * *

I was in the fire
 And under fire,
 And on my mare
 And under my mare.
 I flew in the skies,
 I plumbed the sea.
 And death in the eyes
 Has gazed at me.
 In battle I've lost
 So many mates,
 But I've not forgot
 Our youthful fates,
 Our youthful will,
 And thoughts on the wing.
 I feel them still,
 Like the rustle of spring,
 Of forests and streams—
 My spiritual store,
 Awake, and in dreams,
 Evermore, evermore!

1956

What's To Be Done?

I want to marry—but gently does it!
 I think at night.
 By day discuss it.
 To some young girl shall I get wedded?
 But I myself am far from young.
 Get hitched—
 And afterwards regret it:
 No, with a young one I'd get stung!
 Get married to some confirmed old maid, then?
 My friends are against it, and they are right:
 Like some mad gad-fly all the day then
 She'd buzz at me—and half the night!

I want to marry, and yet I'm doubtful:
My head from thinking is spinning round.
A widow, it seems, would be most hopeful.
A widow it is, if one's to be found!
But with a widow life won't be heaven.
It will be hard—just wait, just wait:
Not only to love for one's self, but even
To love her too for her former mate!

1959

Concerning Wine

What need have I of wine?
That is, my friends, a trap.
Already, many a time,
I've been made drunk without that.

Beneath the springtime rains,
In hazy springtime dreams,
My blood beats in my veins,
Itself ferments and streams.

The bumble-bee's deep boom,
The meadows flowering fair.
Ah, summer's drunken noon,
Inebriate honeyed air!

Gold apples on the boughs—
A wine-sweet one I found.
The smell of autumn brews,
My head goes spinning round.

The blizzard's blinding mad,
Like a goblet rings the ice.
With winter's silver mead
I'm tipsy in a trice.

From love's sweet lips I suck
The heady honey-dew.
I must confess I'm drunk
On them the whole year through.

What need have I of wine?
That is, my friends, a trap.
Already, many a time,
I've been made drunk without that.

1965

If I Only Knew

There, where the end of all my roads is measured,
In endless silence death's dark gate I see.
And when I once appear upon that threshold,
Then there will be no homeward road for me.

I am no coward, and so I strive no longer
To put the fatal question on one side.
But there are times when I'm afraid to ponder
How once across that threshold I must stride.

But if I only knew, and knew for certain,
That there, my love, again I'd meet with you,
Again should hear your voice's tuneful burden,
Again should feel your gentle breathing too,
Then of that threshold I should not be frightened
At any time—
Nor in cold darkness bide,
But irretrievably, myself, by love enlightened,
Should make that stride.

1969

KHVVYODAR ZHICHKA



KHVVYODAR ZHICHKA was born in 1927, in the village of Mars, in the Gomel region. He graduated from the Gorky Literary Institute in Moscow.

His first verses appeared in the press in 1947. Later collections of verses have since appeared, such as *Stand on Guard, My Heart; Dewy Lilies; Infusion*, and others.

“But what will the neighbours say?..”
“Here runs the pattern...”



* * *

“But what will the neighbours say?”—
You timidly ask once more,
In the entrance to your place,
Though only one kiss I implore,
There, right in my very face,
You have closed the door.

“But what will the neighbours say?”
Until the day dawns above,
To find an answer some way
To that difficult question I strove.
What to reply, to reply?
Suggest something, Love!

But what will the neighbours say,
When bird-cherry spring blooms wide,
And I hold you up to the skies,
Above our young planet in pride,
And cry: “Oh world, feast your eyes
On my beautiful bride!”

1961

* * *

Here runs the pattern—in lovers' fashion:
Squeeze hands and sigh, fall silent once more.
...The electric trains past us go dashing,
And boldly into the blackness roar.
Machines! They don't like standing waiting,
Nor wasting youthful verve in vain.
Away they swiftly fly, vibrating,
Bright metal brought to life by brain.
Soon into depths of cosmic darkness—
The wonder of six continents—
A dawn-bright rocket, shedding its harness,
Will soar, on dare-devil pinions bent.

The cosmonauts are youthful persons,
Well, very much today like us—
To those far planets carrying, urgent,
Our earthly beauty, and our trust.
They won't forget to carry the fashion
Of lovers—to sigh, fall silent once more.
...The electric trains past us go dashing,
And boldly into the blackness roar.

1969

VASIL ZUYONAK



VASIL ZUYONAK was born in 1935, in the village of Machulishche, in the Minsk region. He studied at the Borisovsk Teachers' Training College, after which he graduated from the journalistic faculty of the Byelorussian State University. He worked in the republic's periodicals, and at the present time is the editor-in-chief of the children's literary journal *Birch-Tree*.

He has been publishing verses since 1954. His collections of verse include *Jolly Merry-Go-Round*, *Steel for Flint*, *Steep Slopes*, and others. He writes a great deal for children.

Memorial

"Arise, dead tyrants and oppressors..."

"The sound recedes, but melody will stay..."

Memorial

"Why then, young birch, with your life-giving sap
Did you not sprinkle their wounds?"

"Late,

ah too late I grew up here for that.

The lads lie too long 'neath these mounds."

"Why then, O mother, your tears did not lave
This gravel, this grief deep and black?"

"Long,

ah too long on my way to this grave,

Tears have drawn back,

Tears now I lack.

Sorrow has sucked them away."

"Why then, O mother, in fierce anger's force
Is gravel not scorched into sand?"

"Stone is my anger.

In petrified wrath

Thus o'er this grave I stand."

1963

* * *

Arise, dead tyrants and oppressors

Of every people, every age!...

And you who reached no rank and treasures,

Though you were eager for that stage.

Come down, and quit your future altar

You gods of our descendant heirs,

And break—without a fee, with laughter—

The circle of your powerless hours!

Forgiving nothing in my visions,

I turn past history's ancient wheel:

Come down, you laurelled apparitions,

One drop of happiness taste and feel.

Not snared by robbery nor carousing,
By evil, filth, and spilling blood,
Above your violent dark debauching
I praise my freedom, strong and good!

No blade of grass seeks my misfortune,
No beast on me vents hidden spite,
No willow in the storm's wild torture
Will bow before me, as my right.

Without reminders, invitations,
Red roses, or conspiracy,
Friendship's sincerest affirmations
Come willingly as guests to me.

The rousing feast of welcomed singers
No goblet of deceit will wreck,
And in my dreams no woman's fingers
Fall, like a noose around my neck.

You, only you, do not know freedom.
The tyrant ever a slave will be.
Bear witness all, in every kingdom,
I am the freest of the free.

Because in you I'm no believer—
Not one hair's breadth, not half, I own.
And long before our proud new era
On the rubbish-dump I threw my throne.

1971

* * *

The sound recedes, but melody will stay—
Just like the golden rustling of a tree.
So my last leaf will fall to earth one day
Upon the shore of that dark silent sea.

No need for tears. No need for soothing words....
Above the waving grasses' feathery dust
And parting pathways, ring, Tchaikovsky's chords!
I may not hear—so listen for both of us!

Across the abyss the Sixth's great notes will float,
And sweep into that swift torrential flow,
Wherein the brilliant march of brass rings out,
Only to fade again in silence slow.

The scherzo will sprinkle down like rough-grained sand
Upon the lid, like some fresh shower of rain,
And glowing like stained-glass mosaic will stand
The years which I shall never see again.

Above my head a poem I have not known
Will quietly hang....

So sometimes in the air

A bird will try to nest upon the crown
Of its home tree, sawn down, no longer there....

My friends will then disperse with steps unsure.
But I shall have my age-old daily bread:
The silent shadows, like deep-frozen chords.
The music grown as cold as any shade.

And then at times a lonely woman stands
Where a grey shoulder bore memorial stone,
Head bowed above sad memory's shielding hands,
In sleepless sorrow, and with cheeks like snow.

1971

A WORD FROM THE TRANSLATOR

I feel that I owe it to my readers to say a few words about the purpose I pursued in translating this anthology.

I have been translating poetry now for over twenty years, and began to read and love Byelorussian poetry about ten years ago, at which time I made my first attempts to translate those verses which particularly pleased me into my mother tongue. During the last few years I took up a more serious study of Byelorussian verse, the Byelorussian language, and Byelorussian history, something of which it is necessary for both the translator and the reader to know, in order to appreciate the modern period.

We learn that it was at the beginning of the current millennium when Byelorussian literature put forth its first shoots, from soil common to them, Russia and the Ukraine. Historical circumstances were such that the Byelorussian people were long denied the chance of developing their literature, and for centuries were suppressed by the Lithuanian princes and the Polish nobility, by whom their native tongue was forbidden, and who treated them like cattle, and finally by the Tsarist autocracy, which called their language with its rich and original folklore, a "barbarous dialect". Their subjection to Russia, however, brought them into contact with Pushkin, Lermontov, and later Gogol, enriching their culture, and influencing such early revolutionary poets as Luchina and Bogusevich, and the poetess Tyotka, in the latter half of the last century.

At the beginning of this century they were infected with the common revolutionary fever, and longed to take their rightful place as human beings among the nations. They found their spokesmen in Kolas and Kupala, with whose verse modern Byelorussian poetry really begins.

My main purpose was to try to bring to the reader as fully as possible, the brightness and beauty, the music and truth, the simplicity and sincerity, the courage under suffering, and that firm belief in the future, which I have grown to love so much in Byelorussian poetry, and in the Byelorussian people, whom it so perfectly portrays.

It was also my purpose to do so in a worthy way, observing certain principles which I have learned by experience. There is a whole vast library of books devoted to the art of translation, its problems and difficulties, especially where poetry is concerned. In dealing with them my principle is to be faithful in all

things, and primarily to the author—his thought, his mode of expression, his style and his poetic character. This means to keep close to the core of the original, preserving everything possible, and avoiding admixtures of the translator's own thoughts and ways. Next, one must keep faith with oneself, and admit that there are untranslatable things in poetry—and there one must carefully seek for equivalents. With patience and persistence they can usually be found. Finally, one must keep faith with one's readers, and present them with renderings of the poems in the English tongue, which read easily and naturally, are beautiful, and bear no obvious and awkward marks of translation.

Here I feel I should mention the question of rhyme. In translating from the Byelorussian, where the rules of rhyme differ from ours, I have used classical English rhyme, nursery-jingle and ballad half-rhyme, consonantal rhyme, so effectively developed by Wilfried Owen, and an anglicised version of the Slavonic form of rhyme. This has helped to preserve the free-flowing and lyrical expressiveness of the verses, and at the same time is quite in keeping with the modern trend towards less constraint in rhyme.

In my work on the anthology I received a great deal of help from Byelorussian writers and poets, from the Byelorussian Union of Writers, and from the Byelorussian Society of Friendship with Foreign Countries. They took me into their homes, and round the Republic, visiting places connected with the life and work of famous poets, to literary and historical museums and art galleries, arranged meetings with writers and literary scholars, and provided me with a mass of invaluable material, showing me Byelorussia and her poetry in breadth and depth, as only they know it themselves. For all this I feel endlessly grateful.

I am also deeply indebted to my wife. She is Russian, and herself a poet by profession. Her constant help and support on which I frequently relied in translating difficult places in the text, made my work considerably easier.

In conclusion, I wish to acknowledge my indebtedness to Progress Publishers and the willing staff who with such goodwill and cooperation helped me on my none-too-easy path.

*Walter May
March 1st, 1974*

ALPHABETICAL INDEX OF TITLES AND FIRST LINES

	<i>Page</i>
A Fairy Tale	
"Fly raven! Somewhere distant"	105
"A forest lake. A lovely day awaking"	201
A Genius Lives Among Us	
"From the depths of the people's creative spirit"	171
A Man Is a Crank	
"A man is a crank.... He sees one minute drop of dew"	336
A Moravian Song	
"Kettle-drum, two fiddles and the psaltery"	216
A Peasant	
"That I'm a peasant all must know"	189
A Riddle	
"'Twas long ago in childhood fair"	228
"A thread without a tangle"	245
About Khatyn	
"Woods are rustling thoughtfully and lonely"	252
"Above the green grove, but not high"	229
Aching Heart	
"True happiness will not come without good reason"	135
After the Storm	
"When overhead there roars the stormy thunder"	158
"Ah, the wings of your white arms!"	271
"All of which we were dreaming"	155
"And fate prepared me too for war"	206
"And when the last sharp volleys of the war"	43
April	
"Ah, April, what you can do to a chap!"	266
"Arise dead tyrants and oppressors"	351
"Around us, as earlier"	65
"At candour, ever happy to tell all"	29
At Half a Milliard Kilometres	
"My life-time, times the speed of sound"	182
"At once when they told me"	291
Autumn Goes	
"Autumn goes in grey-toned tunic"	70

"Autumn goes: a skewbald mare she rides"	32
Ave Maria	
"Ringing cathedral bells call to the Ave"	292
Ballad About a Memorial	
"I hear in subterranean calm"	287
Ballad of Bomb Splinters	
"Thunder and lightning! The night's pitch black"	303
Ballad of the Urals Tank	
"A great armoured giant"	328
"Belarus" Tractor in India	
"Byelorussian young lads made him strong as a bison"	21
Betrothed	
"Worn out, not a doubt, by the long tiring walk"	194
Black Earth	
"From under your plough — and seen far and wide"	316
Blessing	
"Yes, be it blessed a hundred times"	31
Borders	
"You cast a glance upon the land's expanse"	50
Bread and Salt of Hospitality	
"On linen hand-towels, hand-stitched with red cockerels"	109
Brewing Storm	
"Night fills the sky, and the darkness comes crowding"	168
"But I am dozing still and dream"	207
"'But what will the neighbours say?'"	348
But Who Marches There?	
"But who marches there, but who marches there"	191
Byelorussian Pine	
"In every drift it smells of Byelorussia"	37
Byelorussian Song	
"Where's my land? It's where Byelovezha rustles"	151
Circus Horses	
"People are delightedly applauding"	110
Close Relations	
"For any friend or close relation"	174
Clouds and Thoughts	
"Sombre the clouds over heaven's face creep"	193
"Come, welcome guest, and I will give to you"	210

Comrade of My Spring	
“So it may be our paths are not destined to merge then”	310
Concerning Wine	
“What need have I of wine?”	345
Dawn Choir	
“The mists of dawn are still arising”	69
December Scene	
“White from the skies the crystals are scattering”	119
“Do not beg, and don’t expect”	164
Do Not Fade...	
“In her eyes a wonderful gleam was beam- ing”	286
“Do not forsake me now, my yearning sweet”	115
Dreams in Technicolour	
“Do you see dreams in Technicolour?”	270
Earthquake	
“Neath the fetters of mountains the oceans burn”	149
Elegy	
“My life was one long strife with grievous years”	182
Elk Calf	
“A crack in the silence, sharp as a shot”	28
Eternity	
“A brilliant fate for me is foreordained”	59
Fading	
“Ears of rye no longer swing”	193
Fairy Tales	
“When children sleep”	132
“Far beyond the hay-heaps drying”	317
“Far off in Varna’s foothill area”	119
First Post-War Years	
“My bread was never kneaded tightly”	287
For All	
“For all, my bread when hungry”	196
“For every invalid my soul is aching”	134
“Forest groves are bustling with one agita- tion”	280
Fritz’s Trophy	
“‘On to Moscow, that’s your route’”	175
“From where do you come with such eyes then?”	62

Fulfilled Promise	
"Across the cheerful sunlit forest floor"	50
Grain	
"Repeatedly I have thought: Who first"	305
Grandad and Baba	
"Grandad drove to the bazaar"	173
"Grey clouds swept o'er the forest speedily"	235
Grouse Language	
"Say, do you know, down there where the freshets spout"	316
Happiness	
"Human happiness, one with another"	294
Hardening	
"A simple, trusting youth, naive, un- taught"	322
Harvest	
"Scant is the rye, and the weeds half the portion"	165
Heart and Cross	
"A doctor lived in our region"	238
Heather	
"On my fingers here you are lying"	99
"Here runs the pattern — in lover's fashion"	348
"Here they are, the wide and free expanses"	39
Hiroshima	
"Upon your ruins of stone"	104
Homeland Bread	
"The fire burns. And in the trenches"	123
Hope, Little Hopeful	
"Orphaned, the pipe in the forest weeps woeful"	68
"How long it is the storks have not appeared...."	231
"I have known happiness, sorrow I have known"	102
I Hear Your Eyes	
"I hear your eyes. They sing"	107
I Just Thought...	
"I just thought I'd go over one evening, and state"	218
I Love Our Land	
"I love our land, our mother country"	79
"I love the village in spring, like harvest days"	281
"I owe my mother all — my name at table"	186
"I should like to meet you outside"	52
"I thought that it was springtime alone I loved"	231
"I was in the fire"	344

"I would bury my love"	180
If I Only Knew	
"There, where the end of all my roads is measured"	346
"If the truth, though a bitter potion"	62
"If there rose from each company one man"	242
I'm From the Farm	
"With charring twigs aglow shoot through my dream"	225
"I'm not for you, my lords, oh no!"	191
Immortality	
"A frosty day. St. Petersburg. Folk strolling".	215
Immortality	
"I die in battle — count me a Communist"	321
In My Dreams	
"I went higher and higher upon the mountain walking"	49
"In our small town the gardens are a-glut"	212
In Polesye	
"In ancient Polesye, like evening bells"	128
"In summer I find town killing"	64
"In that small village, where I've never been"	116
"In the dark of night the rushlight's flickering"	52
"In the oak grove the nightingale's silent"	247
In the Trampled Rye	
"Never more returning"	283
"It grows dark in autumn quickly"	136
"It is still not yet night"	131
"It seems the wounds have got better"	223
"It's a sight I can't stand ... and I beg"	274
I've Met Them All...	
"I've met them all.... 'Neath skies of lead"	220
Kastus Kalinovsky's Noose	
"It is hard to become the corded noose"	278
Lake Naroch	
"The road had brought us for the night"	143
"Lead on, my heart, as you have all along"	97
Lenin's Laughter	
"Revolution marched — a-left, a-left!"	332
Let There Be Light	
"Why is the saying 'Let there be light'?"	300
Levonikha	
"Ah, Levonikha, Levonikha of mine!"	53
Light and Shade	
"The earth's held fast by roots out-splayed"	242

Lights	
"Our block is enormous to measure"	124
"Like a little green leaf from the tree of my youth long past"	82
Lilith	
"It was Lilith, not Eve, was the first of wo- men"	139
Loneliness	
"What is all this anti-matter?"	237
Lovage	
"The misty morning glances in the hut"	156
Mausoleum	
"Tread prudently here, as befits"	251
May Day Banners	
"Awake with the dawn, my dearest compan- ion"	313
Meditation	
"And silence, and a deep-drawn groan"	283
Meeting of old ponymen	
"You were, it's clear, a ponvman by voca- tion"	37
Memorial	
"Why then, young birch, with your life- giving sap"	351
Memories	
"We grew up, and looked beyond the gate"	147
Misha Kaminsky	
"A hut. And inside the laughter of bells"	24
Mother	
"Not a teacher, nor a trained physician"	209
"Much in this life soon passes by"	247
"My cheek to your lips press nearer"	65
My Dad	
"—You're dumb then? Very well—be dumb, be dumb"	324
My Daily Bread	
"My concern for you, dear native land"	294
"My forest blue, my native forest green!"	116
"My grandad was a village smith"	261
My Last Word	
"—Any requests?—In vain you ask me thus"	308
My Tent	
"In the forest under birches"	31
My Wish	
"I wish to come to you with new-found verses"	21

My Wood	
"My wood, I have come to you as so often before"	304
My Verses	
"Mayakovsky cordially warned before"	312
Night	
"Night. All is calm. Outside there's not a soul"	116
Nicolo Paganini	
"The fiddle-bow dumb night in twain halves slashed"	321
"No, I shall never snatch the stars from heaven"	184
"No sooner had the old well-handle creaked"	205
"No! That was no kind of dream, it's clear"	45
"Not just one month I perish from inaction"	185
Oaks	
"How many young oak-trees have lifted their shootlets"	219
"Of course, it's all the axe's fault alone"	293
"Of what do the nightingales sing?"	122
Oil!	
"Oil! A marvellous fountain flowers"	202
"On that serene and cloudless early morning"	274
"One cold dark night upon the field's expanses"	47
Our Folk Will Win	
"We stumble onward faltering"	165
Our Forefathers	
"My fatherland is ripening ears"	210
Our Line	
"Construction all round"	201
Our Neighbour Pelagia	
"Sleep they drive from distant acres"	340
Out Now!	
"Rise, my dear country, my motherland captive!"	195
Partisan Song	
"You thought, then, fascist"	318
Père-Lachaise Cemetery	
"Above the wall is hanging"	251
Pigeons	
"In the village mid the fruit and flowers"	35
Pines Above Lake Naroch	
"They slowly sway"	299
Poem of Parting (in memory of Yuri Gagarin)	
"The March days were melting away like belated snow"	84

Polesye Legend	
"There, where to the dense and golden cornfield"	260
Potters	
"The gods no clay pots created"	63
Powder Barrel	
"Spirit of blackest blast"	264
Rat-A-Tat!	
"Rat-a-tat! I rapped the outhouse door"	217
Rat-Race	
"Nerves are tingling in the chase"	226
Realm of Mosquitoes	
"Look what you're like, my land"	277
Recollections	
"A shot rang out. Behind the raft"	143
Requiem for Every Fourth	
"Have you seen a wood where it's bright as noon?"	333
Revelation	
"Not long ago, having taken blood from my thumb"	265
Romance	
"Venus' star o'er the earth has ascended"	48
Rye	
"The infinite eternity of the minute"	326
"See how the little star of Venus shines"	81
"Seek me out, send me the call!"	340
"Should my friends wish to know it"	75
Skylark	
"Beyond the sheaves, beyond the rye-field's blaze"	267
Skylark	
"I love you, skylark, ringing, swelling"	71
"So dear to me this endless great community"	205
"Somewhere on the river Nile's green delta"	28
Sonnet	
"Among the sands of Egypt sifting round"	47
Speech	
"A delicate peal.... The thunder loud"	255
Stone Upon Stone	
"On the high scaffolding history cries louder"	309
Strawberries	
"In childhood together we ran"	146
Summer Heat	
"The birds, with not one dewdrop, do not twitter"	112

Sunrise	
"As in the first days of creation"	153
Sunrise Over the Pripet	
"Like mighty cliffs, a weighty wall"	99
"Suppose you make, just for your soul's own sake"	249
Sweetbriar	
"She was pierced thro' and thro' by the cold and the frost"	136
"Take Your Place at the Back!"	
"My poor life's a misery"	166
The "Appassionata"	
"All in vain will you listen for here"	23
The Artist	
"The sun was setting. He had sketched"	219
"The autumn trees look like an X-ray taken"	278
The Ballad of the Four Hostages	
"They took them from parts they loved dearly"	178
The Ballad of the Omen	
"Maiden, for whom are you waiting?"	256
The Bayonet and the Rose	
"Dried is the bed, full of sand"	323
The Beginning	
"Above our heads no toasts were cried"	72
"The birches freeze in the forest"	117
The Book of Spring	
"The spring in silks, in motley clad"	73
The Cooper	
"No cosmic spacecraft he is shaping"	94
The Cradle	
"Heaven's blue is hung like a canopy"	56
"The darkness fell—so full of nightingales"	161
The Day Grew Ripe	
"The day grew ripe. It hung its head"	130
The Death of Malanya	
"To the very hut door, point-blank"	92
The Drummer	
"On the blood-spattered grass lie the tattered banners"	258
The Flame Everlasting	
"By shaggy-haired stormclouds our Minsk has been smothered"	236
The Genuine Thing	
"Tears are always bitter"	106
The Girl and the Smith	
"Once ripe rye was being reaped"	343
"The gleaming candle shines and strives"	48

The Hare Is Brewing Beer	
"Grey mist is sailing from the mere"	149
The Law of Attraction	
"In nature old Newton revealed"	24
The morning Goes Forth	
"What's that? What's heard far in the trees?"	158
The Oak Leaf	
"In August beauty stand the oaks in view"	134
"No sooner had the old well-handle creaked"	205
"The peace so long awaited"	59
"The people all groan from the weight of the sword"	168
The Road to the Front	
"The roads to the front, and the years' stormy threat"	74
"The rocket and the automobile"	223
The Sea, the Sun, I and Our Lovely One...	
"Naively I thought: 'You are mine alone'"	337
"The sound recedes, but melody will stay"	352
The Stones of Brest Fortress	
"Like nervous veins we pulse"	58
The Storm	
"Heavy-browed above the forest sailed a cloud"	80
The Stork	
"Restless stork, with legs so thin and frail"	57
The Thyme's Wild Scent	
"I don't understand or know"	159
"The thrown wide open windows, doors and courtyards"	35
The Voice of the Land	
"I hear a voice, a call resounding"	170
"There is for every poet his plot to harrow"	183
There Lived Once on a Time a River	
"'Do not dissuade me,' said the river"	232
"Through evening's garden, garden rosy-dappled"	111
"Through my window fifteen stars are sporting"	245
To a girl	
"Forgive me — for you must have pardoned others"	43
To Byelorussians	
"Rise, my lads, arise, my brothers!"	164

To Byelorussian Partisans	
"Partisans, o partisans"	197
To My Girl	
"Do not hasten from me, precious light of my life"	194
To My People	
"To the plains, to the wide open space"	169
To Poetry	
"Your captive I, and you—my bolted tower"	180
To My Son	
"On the land where still you cannot stalk"	140
To Tutors	
"To stand beside those young in life"	314
To Work Then, Graver of Light	
"Each morning, like a child of four or five"	224
"Towards day's end the light still lingers"	246
Tract on Poetry	
"I'm aware that various snobs will grimace"	295
Twilight	
"When on the meadows deepen twilight shades"	130
Unuttered Ballad	
"Bird-cherry's pungent fragrance drips"	255
"Upon dawn's writing paper, yellowish-blue"	129
Verses from Lukishki Gaol	
"When thunders ripen in my heart"	309
"Warm the eve, and calm the breeze, and sweet the hay"	47
"Was it the snow-man you were seeking—"	111
"We grew up chewing bread and chaff alone"	135
"We've broken all the laws of gravitation"	184
What I saw	
"I saw how the wind on the ploughed field played"	190
What's to Be Done?	
"I want to marry — but gently does it!"	344
"When, if but once, with praise like thunder"	42
"When fire directed at the bird"	341
"When Vasily fell in war, as he died"	53
"When your lips softly whispered, 'No, no!' to my kiss"	97
"Where are my horses, my horses of black?"	101

White Russia	
"Upon White Russia lies white snow"	128
"Whitening, apple-trees, whitening"	248
"Why plait your hair, with ribbons flying"	291
"Wonders happen — I awake"	115
Work	
"When you are at home I have no peace"	241
"You beg me read.... But what? You do not say"	44
"You, just like poetry, more than a million problems"	42
"You stand beside the smouldering ruin"	284
"You think that sleepless nights are still my part?"	140
Zone of Silence	
"The grasses shine with the dew in forest reaches"	267

REQUEST TO READERS

Progress Publishers would be glad to have your opinion of this book, its translation and design.

Please send your comments to 21, Zubovsky Boulevard, Moscow, USSR.

Редактор русского текста Г. М. Шубина
Художник Л. В. Гритчин
Художественный редактор С. Е. Барабаш
Технический редактор Е. А. Торгушина

Сдано в набор 1.7.1974 г. Подписано в печать 11.9.1975 г.
Формат 84×100^{1/32}. Бумага офсетная. Условн. печ. л. 17,94.
Уч.-изд. л. 16,70. Тираж 4.500 экз. Заказ № 6452. Цена 2 р. 11 коп.
Изд. № 18195.

Издательство «Прогресс»
Государственного комитета Совета Министров СССР
по делам издательств, полиграфии и книжной торговли.
Москва 119021, Зубовский бульвар, 21.

Отпечатано с диапозитивов Ордена Трудового Красного Знамени Первой Образцовой типографии имени А. А. Жданова.
Московская типография № 5 Союзполиграфпрома
при Государственном комитете Совета Министров СССР по
делам издательств, полиграфии и книжной торговли.
Москва, Мало-Московская, 21.



